

# RULE OF THE ROAD

ANNE BYRD PAYSON















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BOOKS BY ANNE BYRD PAYSON

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RULE OF THE ROAD  
I FOLLOW THE ROAD

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ANNE BYRD PAYSON



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PAYSON  
RULE OF THE ROAD

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## PROLOGUE

THE writing of *I Follow the Road* was in loyalty to a suggestion of Dr. E. Stanley Jones and an expression of gratitude to him for what he had shown me. I had no premonition that it would evoke sympathy or extend the vision of its readers as many of them have been kind enough to say that it has.

If it has done nothing else for me, it has put plainly before me the unequaled opportunities of official Christianity, no matter what its featured idea or chosen title. I cannot claim perfect sight or a ringside seat at the clashes between human error and the armies of light, but what I see from where I see it, leads me to believe that the defeatist tone of clergymen and the very few religious periodicals I have read—all of which carried defeatist items—are apologies for the attrition of human qualities in holy men and the presence among some of them of intellectual inertia and sectarian bias. Who wants to go to churches whose clergymen assure one they are out of fashion? Who can grasp the reality of ever-present mercy when the officially religious say that God is in eclipse? The greatest opportunity to extend the knowledge and love of God that this world has ever seen is in the hands of

American churches of every sort, and my New Year's resolution was never to go to churches that treacherously belittle Christ and the devotion of his followers by emphasizing man's frailty, and failing to put forth Christ's power.

Churches should be houses of hope. I know it is easier to speak against things than for them. The heat of indignation aids eloquence, but if we really endorse Christianity's philosophic content, we should realize that "whoso speaketh against man mistrusts his Maker."

I might say in passing that in the summer, at a summer resort, in a church that was crowded to suffocation on a brilliant day, I heard that well-to-do people had forgotten God. There followed a painstaking enumeration of atheistic theses of the last century—four of which have been completely offset by modern scientific opinion. So long as sermons take up so much time in Sunday services, I think they should contain, and I would love to have, some affirmation of God's love to us and of ours to his Son. If only those who realize that Christ is, would let their treasure shine among those who need its light, instead of—like a dog with a bone—burying it in a sect of like-minded worshipers, where its ray is merged in a carefully shaded illumination, what a spread of joy this world would see!

Every man needs to worship, but he needs the

sense of God's presence to lift him to the height of reverent obeisance. Scolding and depressive exposition cannot do that.

Christ's kingdom is the mind. Who can gainsay it? It is not of this earth, it is of our spirits, and those who have become my friends through *I Follow the Road* have trusted me with the histories of their development of Christ-centered character. Their circumstances, the windings of their lives, their care of Christ culture, are put down here in part only and with full permission, as an outcome of and an incentive to fair-minded experiment with a fundamental promise: "Do my will and you shall know of my doctrine."

My experience isn't very wide; the life I live today is still very new, but I look over the Christians of the church and those in the world that I've met through my little book and I find them the most interesting people I've known. They are alert, amazed at their own kind's kindness often, wrenched with pain at human suffering and grateful for the gladness of other people. Like others, who are instinctively well-mannered, they do not dwell on what it costs to be Christian, but they have the price of it in the book of remembrance. Some of us have paid so little for it. Some of us have paid so dear.

The really Christian mind doesn't generalize its sympathy, it specializes in individuals. The idea

that all people are much alike is the fundamental of a mind so blunt that it cannot pare the rind of personality and reach essential differentiation. The psychiatrists split people into groups but acknowledge variants, and I feel sure that the churches will be close behind them. I pray and strive to avoid the belittling attitude of such as pigeonhole people. Each one of us is himself, and none other is quite like him.

I want to thank the groups to whom I've spoken and the men and women with whom I have talked alone for showing me this, as well as for their fidelity and inspiration. They know well how dear they are to me, and if it is a physical impossibility to answer every letter, please let them realize that each one has been in my thought at some time in the making of RULE OF THE ROAD.

# **I**

## **APPROACH**



## APPROACH

### I

**D**ESPITE growing conviction that most church sympathies and activities are superstructures of great beauty reared upon foundations of correspondence with Christ, yet as I move on the road I find travelers upon it whose sympathies do not include either. Nevertheless, their lives are centered upon Christ and they express his love and life in consecutive and ceaseless approximation.

Perhaps the reason for this is that Christ transcends the churches today as he transcended the synagogue when the Baptist plunged him into the Jordan and an inference spread from mind to mind among the onlookers so sure and strong that they saw purity in a winged emblem and caught a sanctioning voice saying—"Thou art my Son, the Beloved—Today have I become thy Father." After that transcendent moment he returned to all temples to "teach with authority."

Men meet Christ today with determining force in some book or picture, in a fugitive verse in a magazine, in the contagious enthusiasm of a chance acquaintance, in rising standards of living—these have a wide religious appeal among Communists—in latter-day scientific semblances, and in preva-

lent interpretations of death, survival, and even reincarnation.

Some of these Christian people have lost all interest in public worship because their churches were self-important, careless, or superstitious, or, more often, because they demanded a limitation of human sympathy as a means of evoking divine power, but more of them have felt that church is too frequently a mere mechanization of man's religious impulses, and most of them have never gone to church services at all.

An unbelievably large proportion of the people I know have never been to church habitually or casually, have varied and derogatory ideas of the financial policies of churches, and are really surprised and invigorated when they find men of spiritual insight and social purpose enrolled as church members or ministers. Yet to all of them the questions arising from thoughts about churches are secondary when they are measured against thoughts of character and of the possibility of direct correspondence with the mind of Christ, of fulfilling his intentions, of delimiting our vision of him, of dispensing the power he adds to our developing personalities. Doctrinal opinions seem to such people purely intellectual attitudes, often resulting from insufficient information, but sympathy with an act or social attitude of Christ or one of his followers seems to them of final importance. Put



down in their own terse phrase, the fulfillment of his promises is his responsibility, our response to his commands—although they call them “social suggestions”—is ours.

The church's greatest appeal to such people is its conservation and dispensation of the Gospels through darkened ages, even if some of the murk was of its own making. In gratitude for such service to humanity I know more than one Christian of the world who has become effectively Christian within a church. Another thought that compels some of them is the idea of Christ's presence with even a few who have met together to commemorate him. No one with whom I have come in contact ever asked me, as an initial demand, to suggest a church to him. On the contrary, almost every letter that comes to me from those without church background—certainly every one of such with whom I have spoken—made the same statement and request, something like this: “I believe Christ to be of God because I never realized God except in him; how does one approach him? My way cannot be yours, for I come from another direction. My need is not yours, but can you tell me how I can appeal to him? It is imperative that I know him more. I do not have beautiful thoughts, then how can I furnish my mind to correspond with and receive his inspiration? If I did, how could I live in this world transformed in habit as I should be, in

purpose and associations as I might be?" Many people said that they felt deep sympathy with Christian ideals and were always reading about their Author, that they had sacrificed this and that in an attempt to achieve some approach to him, but one woman wrote, "I have never attained joy from these efforts, merely hungrier desires and an extended sense of futility."

In all these presentations of aspirations and acknowledgments of unformulated influences, there runs a rough similarity, especially in regard to two statements that I have not yet mentioned; one an almost apologetic declaration that, trying as hard as possible, no oppression of guilt beset the consciousness; the other, that trying as hard as possible also, the writer was unable to rid himself of the burden of a sense of wrongdoing. These mental attitudes seemed the two horns of one dilemma, but I couldn't prove it.

I began cold-bloodedly putting letters of one kind into a large box marked GUILT and letters of the other kind in a box marked N. G. (which was not a derogatory classification but meant "NO GUILT"). I also checked with a large "P" the letters of those who said they had been psychoanalyzed, because I think that such minds have more suggestivity and are much more accessible to influence than those who have not been so treated.

They seem to possess a permanently receptive

quality of mind. Not everyone who had been psychoanalyzed told me about it, but when some adopted, without challenge, all suggestions I made, I would ask them if they had been, and out of eighty such people seventy-four replied "Yes."

I rarely did more than thank people for their kind letters. I really didn't dare to criticize their thought patterns or attempt to intensify their mental discipline. I was, and am, appalled at that responsibility. But some of them were so touchingly and confidently certain that I could help them, that in constant thought of them I began to wonder longingly if I could, and if it would be justifiable to try.

Within one busy week three letters came to me from three very different people. One was the young partner-proprietor of an "orchard" ranch; two was an acrobatic dancer with the address of a first-rate theater, writing under an assumed name; and three was a woman of whom I had often heard, as her signature was associated with civic enterprises and the interests of the Episcopal Church, but whom I knew very slightly.

They were all primarily interested in the problem of the approach to Christ. Their letters were poignant and differentiated, and each writer believed firmly—I could feel his conviction—that I could be of help if I "chose" to try. The responsibility of trying deterred me, as I said before, but

I was haunted by their thoughts and phrases, especially those of the orchard rancher. He told me why he wrote to me without a trace of affectation or reserve. He said he regretted having read *I Follow the Road* because it persuaded him that there was a road that not only was very hard to find, but that possessed no rules that could be learned and observed: it was all both vague and complicated. Inventing and practicing patterns in one's thought, he found, evoked a mood but nothing more, and he was convinced that a thought pattern duly practiced would never hold one to a resolution or help one to a constructive result. But he was also sure that Christ is more than an idea, and he meant to approach him.

In search of a rule of the road, he had read and fallen in love with *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and was reading the Gospels. He wanted them practicalized. "What is for me and what is beyond me?" he asked. Incidentally, he read other things of Bunyan that repelled him very much. As far as his circumstantial and economic history went he seemed a well-placed young man who had gone into partnership with a classmate of his as soon as they had left Harvard. Their venture was a fruit farm in Oregon which he always alludes to as an "orchard ranch." Neither he nor his partner expected to get a living out of it, and he gave me no reason for having attempted it beyond saying that his con-

valescence from pneumonia in Boston had been slow, so I supposed he had wanted an outdoor life with which to build for himself a complete recovery. Actually he wanted to evade his mother. He had never been inside a church except to see and admire its architecture or when he had been usher at a wedding. (He had not gone to a church school.) He had no father, but he had a mother who went on cruises and lived in hotels and took major means of evading minor responsibilities. His letter wasn't long, but it brought me all this information as well as the fact that he felt rich in friendship because he really liked his partner and was liked by him in return. He added that someone in the neighborhood of their ranch posted him the books he wasn't taking home with him when he went back East, and that he began to read *I Follow the Road*, which was among them, thinking it would be a chronicle of commercial travelers, a set of men whose activities were known to him by those who drove about the countryside selling weed-killers and insecticide. Other people have bought the book under the same misapprehension.

The first point of vivid interest in his letter was his realization that most American minds bear somewhere the stamp, "the cliché," of Christianity, and that many of the finest thoughts that haunt and compel us are purely Christian, although it pleases the critics to attribute them (frequently be-

cause someone has been a bore about ecclesiastical detail) to a spillway of specialized pagan derivation. "If they went farther upstream, they would find these acts and ideals and philosophic implications absolutely of Christ," he wrote. At the very end of his letter he wrote that he felt sure that if he talked with me, he could read a few signposts on his road, our road, that at present he couldn't decipher. I really think his letter would have interested Nero in his darkest mood. It was puzzled but so hopeful.

In the spirit that moves us all to try to help one another, I asked him to let me know when he came East if he felt, in the excitement of change, that he still wanted to talk with me. Almost before I realized the letter could have reached him I received a short airmail reply saying that he was to be in a neighboring city the following week and that I could reach him by telephone at a number he gave me. I belong to a club in that town and arranged to have him meet me there at the lunch hour in a fortnight's time. The quickness of it all whetted my interest although I felt uncomfortable about it too.

To begin with, I knew that there was the chance of a young man's being an oddity, who wrote—sight unseen—to a woman who had written a book. There are people who make a practice of writing to authors. I had the sense of being in a scrape, and

just as when I was a child, I rather hoped it would end well and I rather feared it wouldn't. The quality of his letters was always reassuring, when I read them, as I did more than once.

I tried very hard to pray as I waited for that young man on the day of our appointment, but I kept thinking of Sherlock Holmes and Watson awaiting clients in Baker Street. Suddenly I was comforted with a sense of starting out from the level for our climb, like anyone else who tries to help a human mind to a clearer view of divine resources. I shall always feel I was being taught we must start from the flat. Patience came to me and when I saw my new friend I grasped his wholesome reality at once. He suggested force, simplicity, and what one has learned to call background.

He was red-brown in coloring and in clothes. His hair and alert, wary eyes were red-brown, and his face is now so familiar and welcome to me that I am amused when I recall its expression when first we met. He was, I think, as much afraid of me as I was of him, but his was the blessing of taking people easily. He made no apology for seeking me, and while we lunched he answered the questions I put to him, without constraint.

In the same mail that brought him my last note the partners had received an unexpected and wholly advantageous offer for their ranch and had

come East to see if it were made by responsible people. "I came to see you, too," he added, and I realized he had wondered if I were also responsible.

When, out of earshot of the other people in the lounge, we sipped our coffee, he took a little book out of his pocket with "Notes" on the outside in gilt lettering. Then he fished up a tiny fountain pen. I almost cried out, I hated that so, but I did not. It was for me to give him what I could and for him to take it as would help him most, but to be put down in black and white oppressed me.

"How," he demanded with earnestness, "would you define a religious experience?" I wondered how I should define it. I thought and thought in silence, and what I really believe, began to reflect itself in my mind as an image shows itself in a mirror.

"All life is a religious experience to religious minds," I said. "Carlyle, in some forgotten essay on 'Jesuitism' or something else in the volume containing that rather turbulent expression, says that there are inarticulate Bibles in men's actions and in historic drifts—something like that. Man reads those Bibles by the light within him, and Christ lights every man who comes into the world. All experiences can be religious—why not?"

He wrote in his terrible little book.

"What is salvation?" he asked next.



"The light by which life is seen to be a religious experience," I answered.

"That clicks," he observed with satisfaction. He closed the nerve-racking book on his forefinger. I felt reprieved.

"If I accept your definitions of religious experience and—er—salvation, mine is an experience of religion," he announced.

"Tell me about it," it was now my turn to demand. "I am going to be perfectly still that I may listen to all you say. I haven't another thing to do or person to see. Begin."

He began by telling what he had been, very sensibly and literally. He said:

"All my life through, when I've climbed an Alp—I went to school in Switzerland—or when it's been a fine day at sea, and especially the first time I saw our ranch in blossom, my mind has swung away toward God, but I've always thought of Christ as the most advertised and least actual of beings. He seemed to me a super Santa Claus, which the baffled bankrupts and shipwrecked sailors snatch at as at a straw. H. G. Wells and I had the same estimation of him. Wells may have changed—I have."

"Prayer seemed to you a pathetic waste of time?" I inquired.

"No, I liked to feel that some petitioners were praying for other people; that was attractively altruistic—and any Occidental mind likes altruism—and

I was glad of Christ as an inspiration of Florentine art. I lived two years in Florence, and, like everyone else who thinks about Italy, it has seemed to me miraculous that Christianity survived the foulness of church leadership just before the Reformation. Alexander the VI"—he said in a far-away voice.

I let him muse without interruption, for I didn't want to seem eager, and when he began again he was speaking as much to himself as to me.

"I didn't realize that people loved God or were consumed with desire to serve him nowadays. I thought that was a fixation of the Middle Ages. I thought the human race had sloughed off the Christ-sympathy. But I feel it so—"

I couldn't help crying out, "Cultivate it."

"I do," he said, "I'm here to be taught."

I told him I wasn't a teacher but that as he wasn't a church person I'd talk with him and perhaps give him material for experimentation. I said, "I think there might be a big element of usurpation in my talking with church people."

"Why do you fuss such a lot about churches?" he asked, impatiently.

"Churches are the official teachers of the Christian religion," I answered.

"Oh! don't let's go into that," he cried, more impatiently. "Call them a beatific bureaucracy and let them go at that."

I admitted it was an interruption just now, and asked him to go on with his story.

He had read consecutively and had deliberately visualized times in Christ's life. Someone said that Renan had a wonderful account of Galilee in *La Vie de Jesus*, and he read it and loved it. It made Christ's surroundings real to him. After that he made a pattern that turned into a game, a diversion. He would pretend to be someone who had come into close remedial contact with Christ and thrust back to such people's first contacts with him, whether rumor, sound, or sight, trying to feel as they might have felt. Then he would develop their realization of divine power. It all began at the ranch, he told me, as a kind of protective pastime in the hour of the day he liked least, when the hands came into the living room to play the phonograph and drink milk and eat the two doughnuts which represented the daily and official hospitality of the ranchers. He called his partner "Jock." We shall meet him later.

I felt as he spoke that there might be the beginnings of unbalanced dreaming in such an inner life, without vent in action, but I sat very still while he told me that his obsession grew until he'd go off by himself that he might pursue his ideas without interruption. I was relieved when he said he at last wanted to *do* something Christian.

"What did you do?" I inquired.

"I sent a hundred dollars to a Society for the Promotion of World Peace," he answered. "After that I tried to learn to pray, and then I tried to remember all the sins that I could repent of. I can't remember any particular sins. I don't feel guilty of anything in particular, but I'm consumed with Christian sympathy and I don't know what to do with it."

When I felt that he had told me enough for a beginning, I told him as briefly as I could that forgiveness is a key to initial and vital association with Christ. Our conscience or our mind may not be sufficiently educated at the beginning for us to want God's forgiveness for ourselves, but there is no elementary Christian living who hasn't festering in his memory a wrong done him by someone or other—a wrong that he can forgive. There is always some man or woman against whom we think and often perhaps speak. We cannot learn what forgiveness is by reading about it or naming it in prayers and then ignoring it in practice. If we practice it we approach Christ, we become one with him.

"Look for forgiveness," I told him, "in the newspapers, your friends' lives, your reading about Christ. Read about Stephen, think of Christ on the cross; he didn't say to the thief who couldn't accept his love and promise, a single punitive word. Reconstruct Peter's offense, Christ's inter-

vention for Malchus, his swift pardon to Peter, his stabbing glance of comprehension, the healing of his pardon. Think ceaselessly of those things. From now until we meet again, reject retaliation. If you can't help seeing that people are against you, don't blink it; accept it and forgive. Laugh at bitterness. In a week's time, a day's time, you will be nearer Christ than ever you hoped to be."

We parted.

## II

Almost every day of my life I take a half hour, toward evening, and after I've practiced some pattern I've evolved or am evolving in the interest of diligence, or simplicity, or being Christian fundamentally, and letting the fact of that flower where it will, I realize Christ's presence in our world and attempt forgiveness. I try to forgive those who balk me, who fail me, who misrepresent me, who eat away my time with visits to enlist my interest *against* someone or something, for in my time and town there has been a great deal of ineffectual protest that never gets beyond signatures to typewritten pages. I try for a clearer view of Christ and his teachings, and, above all, I try to estimate and find my own responsibilities so that I don't usurp other people's. Among my responsibilities the day after my meeting with the orchard rancher I found the statements I had made to him.

I felt I ought to substantiate them and discover exactly why I truly believe that in forgiveness we achieve union with Christ. If it were the result of general experience, I should urge it as one way of sure approach to him; if it were an individual conviction, I should have to back it with observation, perhaps explanation. Forgiveness is so often presented as a duty without one word of its spiritual result, when it is really the anteroom of audience with Christ, and leads to him inevitably. One can but be thankful that its rewards are tremendous, for it is so often so difficult to forgive. Forgiveness is set about with sophistry and bitterness and hate, and some of those who nobly forgive talk about the duty of it rather than the delight of getting it done, as people who are ill detail agonies and have but a word or two for relief at pain's subsidence. I am forever reading Spinoza, who seems to me, for all his rationalistic processes, a greater saint than many on the church's calendar; and when I thought of the attribute of extension he imputes to God, forgiveness shone out as a brightly lighted idea ablaze in my ignorance.

I knew that the ways of approach to Christ are as many as those who seek him and that those who approach him for what is, in a sense, self-interest, for health, peace of mind, any good gift that is of the mind rather than merely materialistic, find him if their quest is sincere to intensity. The roads are

many, but all of us travel toward him in a mental vehicle; some item of truth or experience bears us on; progress would be too slow lacking this (as in ancient savagery) if we attempted it in our own strength and knowledge alone, and our course would be vague without definite word of where others had gone.

Repentance impels some people to find a means of approach, fewer than of old perhaps, through the cessation of guilt consciousness because of exploitations of an ancestral mind and the comforting assurance that the evil that one does is a sort of hangover from the malevolent practices of Great Aunt Bessie or Grandfather Blank or an even earlier racial antic of uncharted eld. Then, too, there is the suggestivity idea, "I cause you to sin from the impingement of my innocent idea on your idiosyncrasy," and vice versa, and crime becomes hopelessly collective until it is hard to believe that there is enough individualism in our psychoanalytical, gregarious, group-conscious generation to let people feel personally responsible for error unless they are intrinsically and ruggedly individualistic. One has also to possess an educated conscience and the Christian education of conscience is a confused enterprise. No longer confined to one's thoughts of Heaven, but welded to one's practices on earth.

Churches are still officially our spiritual edu-

cators, but most of our education and culture is extraecclesiastical, though the best of it escaped from churches and has sown itself the world over and matured in developments that have lost all identification with church influence, but which are basically, rigorously Christian: the simple life, voluntary social sacrifice, the adoption of children, etc., exemplify this. This means that the world, because of past ecclesiastical intervention, is educating its own conscience at the feet of Christ, and that in this process the social and spiritual insight obtained affords here and there a revealing, if fleeting, glimpse of the individual himself, so that he ceases to be the pitiful approximation of some type of contemporaneous advertisement. There can be but little doubt, I felt, that the sense of personal responsibility for wrongdoing has lessened with some of us, but that those who do feel it, do so in appalling fashion, feeling responsible for others besides themselves in the loneliness of individual failure, stung beyond endurance by reproaches and chance allusions. Sin-centered cranks who disseminate dreariness eventuate from such mental conditions. I have seen other weaker people who make unhappiness wherever they go, who consciously wallow in early parental mismanagement and attribute all moral and material failure to it. Although they are old men and women they are still presuming on it and paying psychiatrists to re-



enforce their convictions. Others feel themselves to be the keepers of the whole human family instead of one brother.

Some minds who are given a realization of Christ, later realize guilt retrospectively, having experienced forgiveness first, or at the same time that they became conscious of guilt. Their wrongdoing confronts them from the past. "I didn't realize at the time how wrong I was. It came to me in a flash that I had done an evil thing." "Years afterward I saw the mistake that I had made." These are phrases often written to me, the facts that recurred to the memories of the writers being different in degree and kind. A sense of cleansing had antedated any realization of specific stain because primarily conscience had received its education after an inner assurance of obliterated guilt, an acceptance of the possibility of a blameless life.

Such seekers think seldom of themselves in seeking Christ; his fascination for the human mind draws them, and their experience is like Peter's, who knew our Saviour familiarly before that day on the shore of Gennesaret when the fishermen of the two boats were washing their nets. Christ's power smote him and his dominance of nature derided Peter's own uninitiated vitality. The knowledge of a man who watched the wind among the hills and on the lake's surface was nothing as against what the Master of Minds evoked from

nature—that “universal and publick manuscript.”

He felt himself inappropriate as a companion to such greatness, abased, discouraged for the moment, as any who come close to Christ's power, if only for a moment, must sometimes feel. “I am not fit for this approach, don't waste such treasure on me, depart from me, for I am a sinful man”—these are exclamatory, momentary protests, the emptiness of deflation, the ebb of self-sufficiency that is sequentially filled, with realization, with vision. The moment before Peter was raised he felt the “man's nothing perfect” that Browning submits to “God's all complete,” and was “upraised” after that stoop of the soul that in bending “upraiseth it, too.” It is an acute but not protracted humility.

Man, being what he is, cannot sustain a sincere humility for very long except on a foundation of the wisdom that comes of habitual intercourse with Christ and his fellow interpreters of God. The beginners who try for it because it is highly recommended by the most famous saints often practice a repulsive hypocrisy, for humility is a sensation like heat or cold, it is not a saying or a sentiment, and when it overcame Peter, he was healed almost as soon as he was hurt. Peter is a timeless being, up to date in word and work, with an illustration for all ages. In the Acts he shows a high and noble pride in his spiritual career and a broad-hearted estimate of all men, his humility is a thing which he feels

when he measures them against God and himself with them, a far saner expression of Christianity than a spurious self-depreciation. John the Baptist demanded repentance—our Saviour gave pardon primarily. He led the way of forgiveness and he asked us to take up our crosses and follow him.

The more I thought about it all, the more I saw two times of repentance in contemporaneous actuality and in the history of things past—repentance as a deferred experience which waits on the education of the conscience, and repentance which precedes realization of Christ's forgiveness, approach to Christ because his forgiveness is deeply desired. As against the first, I had heard of a blameless, impeccable old lady—whose approach even to music is moralistic—who said that she suffered chronically from the old-fashioned conviction of sin, while one of the most constructively Christian people in to-day's affairs tells me that a sense of sin blots out Christ's presence for him, suicidally sometimes, so that more than once he has called up his doctor and asked for one of his assistants to stay with him till the cloud passed. He can't tell why that is, unless the shadow of ancestral mind tinges his alert brain when he is tired or when the strain of bad weather oppresses him. That may have been the kind of thing that attacked Charles Lamb's sister when, bitter sorrow devouring his kind heart, he walked her across the fields to the madhouse when

she felt the tragic mania coming on. It is something beyond the poison of fatigue that such minds feel, and it is our common social practice to ignore it in its earlier phases. We don't recognize it. I felt I might unravel a little of this snarled skein of material if I could get to the end of the thread, but one idea after another presented itself, fact followed fact. Nothing was a beginning, nor an end.

With my mind full of the orchard rancher, I prayed for courage to go to my book of letters marked GUILT. I felt like investigating the dilemma's other horn. It was the cheering contradiction of his sense of no guilt that braced me to take from it a thin piece of gray paper, recording a prolonged, corrosive dissatisfaction. When first I had read that short stiff note, it had hurt me like a sudden buffet and had stuck to me like a physical ill. It was concentrated despair, and I returned to its consideration because it was part of my material, not in honor to be ignored, and because it registered a fundamentally different state from that of the sane red-brown young man, trying to break through to a life with Christ. It was a letter from the lady signed with a familiar name.

After one paragraph which conveyed misery, it asked for an interview. After a lot of indecision I arranged for one, saying that I would go to the writer's house at any time that we could be uninterruptedly together for an hour.

When I arrived there, she found that we had met. "It's you, is it?" she asked, and I could see that she was shocked that her admissions had been made to someone within her world. But after a few moments of indecision she decided to talk to me as she had planned. Our acquaintance had been so slight that I had overlooked it entirely, but what she was about to do was momentous to her because of it.

She was well over fifty, and her house expressed her personality. She had bits of Gothic detail under glass in a Georgian living room, and a Florentine primitive of impassive feminine beauty glanced at us from under eyebrows plucked to artificial arches like the flesh-and-blood beauty-parlor products of today. She herself was a woman of large frame with a hard voice and a dignity so oppressive that I wished she would lay it aside.

"I sent for you because—" she began, pompously.

I put my hand on hers—"You didn't send for me," I said; "you suggested an interview and I arranged it in the hope of helping you. I know that your beginning like this is involuntary, but it's the kind of tone that might hinder us because I loathe it so."

She sat very still; so did I for a moment or two.

"I am very unhappy, I am wretched," she declared at last in the voice of a little child.

I told her I was terribly sorry, that I had caught her wretchedness from her letter, and asked her if she knew why she was unhappy.

"No, unless it's because I'm an unhappy nature or sin is consuming me. My psychiatrist thinks I have a deep-seated neurosis whose basis I unconsciously withhold from him."

"Do you like your psychiatrist?" I inquired.

"I love him dearly."

"Has he helped you?"

"His evident desire to help me has cheered me."

"Have you consciously withheld things from him?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He thinks church is bad for me."

"Will you tell these things to me?"

She was silent for very long. I got up to go, but she pushed me back in my chair and actually shouted, "Yes!"

"Why won't you tell him?" I asked.

"Because he wouldn't understand."

"Why not?"

"What has become real to me is still unreal to him. The drama of an inner life is always played by the same characters in the theater of his mind, but the cast in my tragedy is unknown to him. He gives pills to cure repentance and sedatives for a sense of sin, and that's what's killing me!"

I told her psychiatry dealt ably with these. She shook her head stubbornly. I had apprehensive thoughts of being an accessory to some foul crime

as she cowered with remorse. I looked at her uncomfortably.

Then she rose from her chair and as she stood shaking before her great chimney place, told me her story so unbrokenly that I saw she had rehearsed it many times in her own darkened reverie. It had plowed a furrow in her brain.

"When I came to live in this house," she said, "I succeeded a very lovely woman to whose memory my husband remains deeply devoted—his first wife. She died and her baby died too. I had been his secretary while he was on a government commission. He was taking me to a meeting in connection with it and a truck driven by a drunken man hit our car, killed the chauffeur and hurt my head badly. I was unconscious; he knew nothing of my family's whereabouts, and it was the Friday evening before Labor Day. I lay in the hospital of a tiny town. He sent for an eminent surgeon, and when I came out of the fog he was by my bed, and at the end of two weeks I became of great interest to him. We married on Thanksgiving Day and I began to be lonely. He wouldn't let me work with him as a secretary any more, but he has always treated me as a business partner. That was my deepest joy after a year or two of marriage.

"I soon found out why his friends wouldn't be mine: his first wife's relatives, to whom he had been so kind, refused to have me as an associate. I think

their kind of conjecture as to my ability to contribute anything to their social scene finished me with everyone. Slander and aspersions on my moral character would have interested some of those people, and produced protectors, but the other method shut me out completely. My husband wanted pleasant friends for me more than we wanted the children who never came, and that was a great deal."

I rocked with laughter; I couldn't help it, as she described going to some spa in the Southwest to attempt friendship with a woman who seemed better disposed toward her than the others. She described a long line of gasping fat women, clutching a metal rail, while some priestess of the bath in a checked short skirt and suntop beat them to their knees with a swift and heavy stream from a hose to break down too solid flesh. Despite this sacrificial interlude, no lasting friendship ensued. Heartsick, on her return journey she was told by a business friend of her husband's of a young man in England who, being the fourth son in the family, had no profession open to him but the church. He had made a hit in it and was now the big shot of his family connection. She thought this young man stuck in her memory because she had heard the expression "big shot" for the first time in connection with him.

Her face grew so despairing that any impulse



toward further laughter died in me and I listened with sympathy to her account of how she deliberately chose the church, as he had done—the most fashionable church she could find, and from her own allowance, without telling her husband, paid for two seats in it. She had never gone much to church and her husband at first declined to go with her. The first time the Rector asked for support of one of his parochial ventures she wrote him a letter, telling him she felt great interest in what he had said and asking how much would be needed to finance his idea. He came to see her on the day he had received her letter. She questioned him as she well knew how, having been a stenographer at big business meetings, and just before the next Sunday service sent him her post-dated check for half the amount he had named, the check to be presented at the bank if he had raised the other half by the day named on it. He called her by telephone to consult her about raising the money. She asked him to dine; he rushed about to possible donors; she asked them all to dine with him at her house for consultation. Emphasis had changed. They now courted her as a giver who might give more; it was important to please her; social life unfolded, and in a short two years she belonged to and had ramified with interest and authority into a thousand enterprises. She excluded all newcomers or those who had been actively rude to her in times

past. She pilloried her predecessor's family without speaking against them, seeing them often enough to disarm general criticism, but allowing them to realize that slights and social restrictions came through her. "Of course," she admitted, "in a town like this you can't do a job like that thoroughly, as everyone has so many social contacts, but you can do a great deal."

I agreed.

"You enjoyed that?" I asked.

"I loved it," she answered, with the first enthusiasm she had shown.

Her description of her life was frank and not impersonally given as I have given it; it was a concrete narrative with names and places, whole conversations slid from her memory like jelly from a mold.

"And now," she ended, the light of battle waning in her eyes, "in spite of all that I'm wretched. My comfort is the church, and yet I feel reproached by my reasons for becoming a part of it every minute I'm there. How can you help me?"

I told her I wasn't an apostle or conjurer, and that I ought to think about her in one of the times when I try to realize the possibilities of Christ's philosophy and ethic. She said she felt I'd forget her. "I know about you," she cried out in bitter disappointment. "You won't do a thing about me, really—you're like the rest of them."

"I hope I shan't be like that," I answered, "but you aren't too easy to put one's ideas before. You come to me day after tomorrow and we'll try to clear some things away."

I got into the elevator to descend to the street level, but she followed me and with a stern hand forbade the butler to open the front door to me. Then she pushed me into a little coatroom and looked at me with beseeching eyes.

"What is the matter with me?"

"You've fought the good fight as a mercenary," I answered, truthfully. "You'll have to train yourself to fight for the cause alone, although mercenaries fight well too."

I made a dash for the door, but she followed me, protesting that she didn't know what I meant.

"Think it over; you will," I called over my shoulder.

"Give me something to do," she called back from the doorway into the street. "I want a thought pattern."

I turned, extricating myself from the indignant wayfarers who were protesting, and naturally, to my stationary presence in the middle of the pavement.

"In the end of the thirty-seventh verse of the sixth chapter of Saint Luke's Gospel there is something you could do," I told her, "after a lot of practice."

Then I shot away from her to my house, wondering if I had hit the right place of "forgive and you will be forgiven."

### III

Thus, on the fourteenth day of November, the material on hand for my quest was a young man determined to live in the light of Christianity and a middle-aged woman who had been a pillar of the church for very practical reasons, but who had suffered in her sense of having used beauty to selfish ends. I supposed that was it, in essence.

I began envelopes for both of them, with their letters, an account of what they had said to me, what I thought caused their friendliness and confidence, and other things. The young man had no church background and no experience of repentance, he was regretful about that; the woman was devoured with remorse in the midst of a technically blameless life. Both had been psychoanalyzed by people of good reputation. I very much wished that I had access to a contemporaneous someone beside myself who had tried forgiveness as a means of approach to Christ.

My second interview with the lady of the churches was horrid. She came in like a ship under full sail and I could see that her phrases were the repetitions of other people's sayings, but I felt that the thoughts expressed were all her own.

She had evidently been in conference and had guided or garbled its result.

“‘Forgive and you will be forgiven’ is, of course, heavenly counsel,” she said, “except where forgiveness impairs a standard.”

I was interested, but said nothing. She asked if I understood her and I told her not yet. I very much wished for a stenographer or a dictaphone. She was visibly improvising.

“What I mean is that if I forgave wholesale my early persecutors”—she repeated the word “persecutors” with heightened color and theatrical emphasis—“I should be a sort of accessory after the fact.” (Evidently, we both read detective stories, I observed.) “Saying, as it were,” she continued, “such cruelties don’t matter; there was no fault; let’s blot out my critical attitude; you’re forgiven, tra, la; I love you—forget it.”

I knew she was capable of creating that point of view, but not that way of talking. I wondered with whom she had been.

“Forgiveness,” I said (mildly for me), “presupposes an offense.”

“Not wholesale, unconsidered forgiveness,” she cried. “I can see perfectly that interior forgiveness, my saying within the silence of my own heart”—(I couldn’t forbear telling her that that was quite a phrase, it was so patently not her own!) —“‘I forgive’ would be good perhaps, but I under-

stood from you that you recommended a recorded forgiveness."

"You understood perfectly," I replied.

"That would be a basic error, the wholesale articulate forgiveness you recommend playing into the hands of evil, and spiritually unwise."

I wondered if she had read Nietzsche lately. I cannot recall all she said, but it was in much the same vein. One thing she said really frightened me—that priests, acting for Christ under God, alone possessed the privilege of forgiveness. Pusey—she had said something that sent me to the public library for his life—and Bernhardt sat cheek by jowl in her innermost self.

"God's forgiveness, absolution, is said to be the prerogative of priests." I continued: "That belief is the bulwark of the dying Catholic. We are not usurping God's forgiveness when we forgive as a means of entry into his presence. We are not so silly or so presumptuous. We are offering him our own petty pardons, and in that act his peace to those forgiven comes to us. We find ourselves acting with him, not for him."

"My dear, you're blasphemous," she cried. "I wish you would talk with Mr. Blank," she entreated; "he is the assistant in our church and very spiritual. I think he would help you greatly. He has me."

"I don't doubt all you say," I answered, "but I

don't want to talk with him. Are you sure you haven't misquoted him?"

She rose indignant. "Have I not convinced you?" she asked in parting. "Don't you feel clearer about it all?"

"I have not noticed any fog in my mind about forgiveness," I replied. "Thanks a lot for coming to see me and the best of luck. Good-by."

I was fearfully depressed. I believed I had wasted time, failed somehow or other, been overconfident that I could lead this mind to greater peace.

I began to examine her ideas of the evils of recorded forgiveness. Before I realized it I was reading the New Testament all over again, hunting for light on the whole matter. I began to read the Epistles. I read Spinoza's life—a new one—and his extraordinary lack of resentment seemed part of his whole noble concept of God. He was rationalistic in method, but he knew the Unknowable was benign, with inherent powers of its own extension. He forgave life itself. Spinoza thought. I don't think. The balance of pro and con is a thing I often attempt but rarely achieve. I rested on his height and from it I saw the divine in new beauty. I could love that agonized woman even if I couldn't express love for her in effecting her release from a recurrent and deeply resented torture. Forgive and you become a part of God. Forgiveness lifts you to a sense of his function.

The seventy-times-seven exercise is the Christian's perfect spiritual command, authorized by the prodigal's reception; the calling back of Lazarus without bargaining or conditions; the healing of Malchus and Peter's pardon; words of comfort to the thief beside Christ in death; the lack of reproof to the other who could not accept him; the bare, bold statement that that mind knows forgiveness which dispenses pardon—which seemed to me enough to back up my own experiments, and made these things into a conscious ratiocination, a chain realization and sequent visualization.

I made a pattern for her in the dead of night, alternating my realization of Christ's pardon with the police items on the short-wave radio beside my bed, trying to balance crime and Christ, trying to make extremes meet within distress. But I had not grown out of my unhappiness about the lady of the churches. I didn't believe that what she told me the clergyman had said was an unbiased report. I fancied that she had run away with his—perhaps perplexed—silence as assent. I felt she had shut the door of her mind on me and that our good-by that day was final.

I was dining out one evening and after dinner other guests came in to hear the Budapest Quartet. One of them was the orchard rancher and when the last strains of their glorious music were over, he drove me home.



"Please ask me in for a chat," he said. "It's not so very late."

Snow had fallen and silenced the streets beneath us.

"How far have you gone?" I inquired after we had both spoken of the music and the silence of the outdoors.

"I am facing a revelation," he said, "and I've begun to act on it. Please don't laugh or try to pull my interpretation into shape." I told him very earnestly that I wouldn't. "It was partly thought," he went on, "and partly a dream I had that faced me up to the facts. Jock can't get it at all, but I'm sure of it."

"You've talked with him?"

"No, but he's always underfoot and gets at things."

He said further that someone had spoken to him of the widow of Nain, a friend of his who wrote for a big newspaper, and he had reread the story because of that allusion, realizing that he himself might as well be dead for all his mother ever saw of him.

Although she was a difficult mother to enjoy, voluble and caressing and prone to explain him to people in his presence, he felt his was a "rotten" relation to her. She was always wanting to make him the pretext for parties of people he found very unattractive.

"She's extravagant and easily flattered too," he added, "but lately I can see she means to come home and be near me and I've been casting around for a new way of sidestepping her. I felt as if she'd dilute the man I'm trying to be. I thought of getting the psychiatrist to write to her and tell her she's bad for me, but I had the darndest dream. I was prevented by it. You know those rooms decorators make in miniature to show you what your house will be like when they've finished it?—little boxes fitted up with tiny curtains and toy mantel-pieces and tinfoil appliques?"

"I know them," I assured him.

"Jock and I were, last weekend, with the Smiths, who are building a new wing, and we were shown one of those things. As a matter of fact we got rather sick of it. I dreamed that I saw different widows' dead sons in a whole doll's house full of those tiny rooms, each man was dead to his mother, but alive otherwise. One was mad about an impossible woman, one was drunk, one was behind bars, one was ashamed of his mother and pretended not to see her; my psychiatrist was suddenly our old butler and was pushing on the inside of the house door to keep her out while she was pushing from without to get in. I laughed at the dream when I woke up, but I didn't tell it, and when I was alone I could see all those people as if I'd known them, every mothers' son trying to shake

his mother. When a man has been psychoanalyzed, he finds his dreams are rationalized and he treats them with greater respect. I was afraid to go to sleep for fear I'd dream the thing again. I cabled my mother on my father's birthday. I just said, 'Thinking of you both today.' She cabled back, 'Thank you, dear.' I was surprised at that third extra word. I got a letter from her yesterday that was desolate. She said in it that a silly woman's sorrow was all that she had, that wisdom was solace and silly people had none, and then she told me that she had inherited ten thousand dollars from an old aunt she had almost forgotten about and a house in a college town. She wished that she hadn't, because the house would be a nuisance and no one was buying houses in these hard times, but that if I could sell houses as well as ranches I should be able to sell hers. It was a doleful kind of letter. I went out for a walk by myself and I went over every grievance I have against her, every reason I have for wanting to live alone. I took your tip and wrote them down, and then I said in a sort of prayer—I may not be capable of prayer—but I said, 'Help me, Spirit of God, when I'm failing, to forget all this list of things I hate in my mother. Join me to Christ's forgiveness until I have forgiven her raised public voice, her voyant costumes, her pretending to know more than anyone else about socially eminent people.' "

"Your conscience has begun its education," I said. He agreed.

"She's mine and she's alone, more shame to me," he said. "I'm going over to bring her home. I'm going the day after tomorrow. I can't settle on a conspicuous Christian career very well until I've settled her, can I?" His own intensity embarrassed him and he had begun to lighten it by chaffing himself.

"You're doing something constructive; you're on the road, you've forgiven," I said.

"I feel more scared than anything else," he acknowledged, "and I do mind Jock's attitude. He says nothing at all to me."

"Neither do you to him," I reminded him. "Is he going with you?"

"No."

As he left he added: "That dream showed me I was violating a standard, kicking against the pricks, trying to rationalize a fallacy. You know what it was; that if people in your family are a nuisance, you owe them nothing. I'm afraid that's rot."

"I think we ought not to tie up consciously with people who are unbecoming to our natures, and ought not to choose such as are so for friends, when we have the privilege of choice," I told him; "but when Nature has put us in a family group, I feel it's decent to stand by that accident. I feel at least it's gallant."

"I think you're right," he agreed, "and she's got a few things to forgive me."

I put that down next morning in my record and was comforted that someone would at least give forgiveness a trial. I sent him a book to the steamer, and in his note of acknowledgment he said that it had taken a big experience to make him do a very small thing and that he longed to get on to something greater. If it doesn't sound irreverent, I ought to record that I felt Christ had attracted a remarkable man!

#### IV

A possible program for the many people who were kind enough to send me letters began to emerge—and retire!—from the to and fro of my thoughts and from some chance and splendid hour of realization and worship that would come to me now and again. It was always associated with forgiveness and the red-brown young man and the lady of the churches. I saw her by chance once, and I received a very amusing letter from him from France, with great depth below the laughter.

After telling me that his mother's mourning apparel was the most elaborately sepulchral to be acquired in modern times, he said that it had occurred to him that something might be effected if he told her straight out how he hated it. He went into her bedroom in the morning to protest

—he had only been twice before in all his life in his mother's bedroom.

"I'm sure you're here to announce disaster," she said.

"I'm here to tell you," he answered, "that you must get clothes that aren't so noticeable. I want you to go to two plays with me. I shan't leave Paris without seeing them, and I don't mean to see them alone." She consented at once, saying, "You're right; it's very Victorian to dress as I do."

He wrote me that he went to church a great deal, that churches made Christian effort real to him, and that Chartres suggested the possibility of real spiritual achievement. He was sailing for home with his mother in a week's time. "With lapses," he wrote, "my plans are succeeding. Once or twice it's been pretty awful, but I went to my room and muttered for ten minutes; then I practiced my first satisfactory thought pattern; then I prayed."

I wondered what his thought pattern was. I may have been Victorian too, or perhaps too consciously a parent myself, for I winced at the clarity with which he saw his mother, and I felt really pained at the unlimited frankness of the way in which he spoke of her. I have come to recognize the way in which the psychoanalyzed talk about their relatives and it is distasteful to me sometimes. It often seems to defy breeding and reticence, but it does give one a vivid picture. After a bit I bethought

me that the boy regarded me as a close friend, and I meant to find out if these observations were for my ear alone or if he favored everyone with an analysis of the maternal imperfections. That question was shortly answered for me by something Jock said.

One of those very pleasant days in which what is to be done is a matter of immediate choice was just coming to an end. I was going to dine out, but I had more than two hours to do nothing in, and I meant to do it. I sat quite still for ten minutes admiring the lull. Then I heard that Jock was in the entrance hall and would like to come up and see me. Without asking, I guessed that my red-brown friend had told him where I lived.

The man was entirely too big for my living room, not drawn to scale, but he made himself comfortable there and cast a very appraising glance on me and my dwelling place.

He didn't say anything at all, and I made up my mind that I would not jabber nervously on; he had evidently come to say something and I hoped he would soon, and unaided, say it. He asked me if I were surprised at his call.

"It takes more than that to surprise me," I answered, "but I think you're here for some specific reason."

"I am—in a way," he replied. "I've read all the books my friend left behind him and I've thought

about him a good deal, and I'm ready to experiment with the commands of Christianity—as a means of understanding it.”

I was amazed.

“I've cleared the ground as well as I could and I should hate to discuss my attempt except very privately, but I thought I'd like to outline my project to you, and after I've caught up with our friend, I'll tell him about it and maybe we can do it together.”

“Why not?” I asked.

He said quietly that he hadn't been “tight” in three weeks;—then he went on, “and I know two religious people, which is a great help—he knows just you—and now me, for I'm getting to be religious too.”

“Who are your religious friends?” I inquired.

“The rector of my old school and Juno Jaschil.”

“The dancer, Juno Jaschil?” I thought of the other dancer called Joy Joyce who had written to me. It flashed on me that they were one.

“Yes—my school was St—s.”

“Have you talked with these friends?”

He said he had, quite a lot, and had found them the greatest help in the world. He had had two long talks with the rector of the school, who had made him feel that human usefulness is inevitable if men honestly seek to show forth their love of Christ, “not in words only.” My heart went out to the rector.



"And Juno Jaschil?" I inquired.

"She sent me to you. I've talked with her almost every day. Her young brother was an accountant for us when we shipped our fruit last fall and he got hold of your book at the ranch and sent it to her. We're interested together, do you see?"

I said I saw and I also shuddered slightly. It was conceivable that the dancer had ulterior designs.

"The brother asked me to go to see Juno when I came here, and I do see her; she teaches me, and she proposes that you begin with us a sort of spirit culture class until we get on our feet and can wade right into it."

"I'm not sure I'm capable of it," I told him.

"Perhaps you'll flounder about at the beginning, but ideas will come to you. Will you? I hope you will." He was eager and I was touched.

"I can't say yes at once," I replied; "I'd hate to make an idiot of myself, and I might do just that, and do far more harm than if I didn't try it. What plans have you—for yourself, I mean?"

"I went up to school and had a long talk with the rector. He thought me over, and the second time he saw me he said he wasn't sure if I could do as much as a clergyman as I could as a doctor."

"You thought of being a clergyman?" I was aghast.

"Yes—if I go in for a religious life, I mean to do it thoroughly; but the rector thought I was cut out

for a doctor. I can always work for someone like Sir Wilfred Grenfell, and I'm a poor speaker, whereas I was good in science and I really like sick people. The rector feels that it's a very great calling to be a minister, and that you must feel it's the only thing you really want to do, to do it properly. I'd just as soon be a doctor."

"When are you going to begin?"

"Next autumn—the rector fixed it up for me."

"What medical school?"

He told me.

"What had you intended to do before?"

"Exclusively nothing but keep out of reach of my family."

"You still feel that way?"

"Absolutely."

"If you study medicine you'll be near them."

"I'll have a good excuse for keeping away from them—the best possible, for the first time."

He looked ugly and stubborn and told me how he felt about his father and mother. They were divorced. His mother had married his father's brother, and his father had married a woman employed in the business from which he had retired. He etched them clearly as he talked to me; his sensitive impersonal mother, lonely, with an urgent dominating desire to make herself felt: his father, still hating her, in pain from arthritis most of the time, drinking as much as he dared and

spending his energies on proving that the world is going to the dogs.

"I wonder if you can see my Christmas Day two years ago if I try to describe it," my visitor cried, savagely. "Mother had me for luncheon and gave me a big cheque, and my uncle looked like thunder when I carelessly mentioned the amount. When I was leaving the house, she secretly gave me things she'd bought for me so he wouldn't get sore about them. It was all so pathetic, but how I hated it! I dined with my father, who fished about trying to find out how much money my mother had given me for my Christmas present so that he could go her one better—only one, however."

"Not too attractive," I murmured.

"It was perfectly damnable," he said, indignantly. Then he launched forth into a vitriolic indictment of his parents and their new connections. I hated hearing it, I wasn't even interested because I could see the tragedy better without obscuring detail, but he went on and on, and I knew I mustn't stop him or rebuke him or even interrupt him with a word of sympathy. I knew he must tell it all to get rid of it all. His code—he had a code—absolved him of sentimentality (the heinous offense) if he told me naked intimacies in anger. If he told me beautiful things in a glow of human feeling that would be sentimental.

There was something heroic in his lack of taste.

His whole outpouring was like a man snatching off his clothes because the weather was unbearably hot, not caring who caught him undressed. He metaphorically threw one garment after another at me. I felt very prim and ashamed of him as he raged on. But when he stopped, there was no return to his story; he sat silent, glowering at nothing. He had turned everything out of the mold of his bitterness, not a crumb adhered.

"Don't feel a moment's embarrassment," I said, "when you remember all the things you've told me, and don't feel you were disloyal, because I shan't repeat your opinions although I am too much interested to forget them. I'm not going to suggest that you overestimated what you've been through!—I don't believe you have—but in the life that lies before you you'll see that you really haven't had as much to endure as many people, and that if you could have worshiped your parents, you might not have laid all your capacity for worship at the feet of God, or at least, it might have been a deferred process. I'm not going to say any Pollyanna things about your father and mother except that if you're a good doctor, they'll be very proud of you. Americans love doctors; it's their fashion."

"I suppose you think I ought to love them—mother and father, I mean," he observed, resentfully. I saw this was a test question.

"I'm not entitled to any opinion at all of your

relation to your parents," I answered, "but I know that whatever it is, it will change as you develop in your realization of Christ's teaching. If you express him in your behavior, he will dominate your mind and you will be stimulated to wise handling of your problem and consoled if it can't be solved."

After trying to pin me down about lessons in thought patterns he went away as abruptly as he had come, but I followed him in my mind. I wanted to try to teach him. I felt I could show him one or two entrances to a happier life, but I was afraid of his directness. I knew that he would teach me too, perhaps carry me up to a height where living would cost me more of ease, where I should have to shake off a few of my beloved weaknesses for the invigorating illumination whose first dawning hurts one's eyes invariably. I sat on, rather dreading the development of friendship with that young man, his singleness of mind, his terrible earnestness, his uncomfortableness. But one thing he saw, one element of discipline he snatched at—the fact that a daily exercise brings result. Think habitually a certain Christian thought, realize habitually a certain Christian truth, consciously traverse a Christian mental tract daily, and you become technically proficient in Christian effort. Express that thought in behavior, realize it in an act, and you stand within the kingdom of God.

All these young people saw beyond that, though;

they saw in a flash what I had seen after peering into the darkness for ages—that if Christ is expressed in human behavior, everything that belongs to him falls into place: the problems of social development, of religious sympathies, of companionships and aesthetic activity—all those puzzling and disturbing connections and opinions put themselves where they belong. All is in order, things are correlated, sympathies are sustained, antipathies become attenuated. I wondered how I could make that young man attempt forgiveness in his first expression of Christianity. I felt I hadn't a very good chance of persuading him to its trial. Early next morning he telephoned me and asked me what happened if one thought continually about Christ and his Church and went on doing just as he had always done. I told him I doubted if that were possible, that it was a fair field for investigation. He came in half an hour later with a book he wanted me to read, and asked me if I would go with him to see Juno Jaschil one afternoon. I showed him the writing on the envelope of Joy Joyce's letter and he said it was the writing of his friend Juno.

## V

One afternoon we set off together, and leaving his motor in a snare of traffic, walked west in the theater district and entered—by the stage door—a

great building with freight elevators and passenger lifts and a long garish corridor with a barber shop opening off it, and a ceaseless variety of avoidable noises hammering on the helpless ear! My friend told me that after I had talked with Juno for a time he would drop in and take me home again. He introduced us kindly and very tactfully and left me facing a splendid body wrapped in a man's dressing gown, a keen face, very wide at the eyes, hair and hands as stylized as an Egyptian statue's. Little rills of silver sweat ran off her cheeks and she told me she had been dancing and must stand under the shower a moment. As the water poured over her, she cried out at me above its rush: "It was a fierce workout," she said, "for an added dance in Act Three. Our show is doing awfully well."

The water was shut off abruptly, a glass door was carefully closed, she flashed behind a screen and appeared before me again in the very gorgeous clothes of a Chinese. With a sigh she stretched herself on a narrow, hard bed.

"I've longed for this opportunity," she declared in her deep, hoarse voice. I told her I hoped she wouldn't be disappointed.

The glance she shot me was friendly, almost affectionate.

"Shall I begin by telling you how I turned in on the road?" she inquired.

I nodded.

"Saint Augustine pushed me onto it," she laughed rather shyly, and I wondered if we were going to ramify into the realm of spirits.

"I heard about Saint Augustine in Detroit," she began. "We were in a show there where I was one of two dancers in a banquet scene, and we went over tremendously. I was engaged to dance for a charity, and the lady who headed the entertainment committee asked me to supper when my charity program was over. It was a big party. They all knew each other familiarly. I soon dropped back, and a very nice oldish man who was a stranger there too, came to talk with me and got me some food. He was a nerve doctor and was giving a lecture next day. He told me that the second book of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* set out adolescent disorderliness as well as anything he knew. He told me about Saint Augustine's robbing the pear tree and why the young non-Saint Augustine had loved doing it. The next day I saw the book in a stationery shop and bought it. I didn't read it at once. Have you read it?"

I said "No." She seemed very disappointed but went on, although I could see that it was hard for her. She feared that I would be hostile to something or other that was to come.

"Saint Augustine was a pretty gay goer as a young man," she said. "He was like an English boy I'd known in London, who had a religious,



loving mother and a father who thought of education merely as a money-making tool."

"Many fathers do," I said.

She thought for a moment and began again: "One morning I rolled out of bed to get to church to hear what they said about Saint Augustine, because I had read him a lot by then and I supposed every church talked about him. He wasn't mentioned. I found that I had learned a lot of his book by heart unintentionally, especially the beginnings of his paragraphs, 'Oh! God, my God'—the paragraph that tells of the apparent simplicity and actual depth of God's Word, as he called the Gospels, I suppose; and lots of others do, too, don't they? So while the service went on I said those words over to myself and asked what sort of church I had been in as I went out. It was a Unitarian church. I took Saint Augustine with me, in my memory, to all kinds of churches, and sat always far back where I couldn't be disturbed by the minister. One Sunday in Buffalo I went into a lovely church late in the afternoon. It was during Lent, I think, and I began to review what I had come to call the church portions of Saint Augustine's book. The minister had a huge, spreading voice and he talked about the serene inward acquiescence to the fact of God that we love to feel in church, but that we cast aside in the world when we leave church for the world—where we need it most. Then he

asked what that 'Amen' within us ratified, what it actually consented to, and he said that it ratified the Perfect Law, the Way, the Truth and Life. He said that George Fox lived within the serene inward acquiescence outside his hours of worship, and I realized that through Saint Augustine, I did, that my happiness was the 'Amen,' and, believe it or not, a few good deeds too. The minister stood at the door shaking hands as we went out and he said to one lady, 'How is Emily?' and to another, 'Is George back?' I came next and I said, 'Could I meet George Fox?' I thought the old lady in front of me might be his wife.

"But the minister said, 'I'd lend you his life if I had it; he died, you know.'

"I said I was awfully sorry.

" 'Many people were,' he answered, 'but his was the kind of mind they would be glad to get hold of even in heaven. So we must cheer up.'

"He looked at me very hard.

" 'Yes,' I answered his look, 'I'm Juno Jaschil, but I love churches.' I thought he had recognized me, but I understood later that he was merely interested in my ignorance. I went to a bookstore to get George Fox's life, but they hadn't it; and one day someone left your book at the theater. I have always thought it was that minister, but I didn't notice the name of his church and he put no card in, and we took a train out of town that night.

Then when my brother's employer at the ranch where he works came to look me up to bring my brother's love to me and a little present, he saw that book in my living room and we two little brooks came together and made a real run."

"You are Southern?" The word "run" for stream had told me that.

"I was a child in an awful place in West Virginia, but I was born in Russia. My father died soon after he came here. My mother had a very large family; we had no money to move away, and very young I began to dance for the men in the drinking places on Saturday nights. A Russian, who had been a real dancer once, showed me things, drilled me, built me a dancing body, and I got a chance to dance at a convention of labor. When I was sixteen, a very dear old man offered to marry me, and I went to live with him in Cincinnati. I danced in a show there and studied everything I could about dancing, choreography, personality in posture, the plastic approach. I met —" (She named a very great dancer.) "He helped me, showed me, was generous and patient. My husband went away on a business trip and while away from home, died of pneumonia. He left a little money and I sent it to my family. I had a better job as a guide in a chorus of a musical comedy. I got a solo part next season. Now I get real money, and love my work. Dancing is a happy art."

At this moment my red-brown young man entered, saying that Jock had told him where I was. The dancer took his arrival quietly; she too had evidently seen him before. He had docked ahead of his schedule, returning for a business matter of his mother's, and he had with him a much older man, slim and short, who took his place with a temporary air and gazed at me with a look of interest and distrust. His dress was that of the usual man of affairs, but he had about him indications of wealth, a superlative watch, an overcoat that had a distinct plot to it, not a mere protection against cold air. And now Jock entered. I could have sworn that no romance existed between him and the dancer, but there was an atmosphere that I was keenly aware of in retrospect, a certain nervousness and a constant scanning of me as if I might go off like a firecracker at a moment's notice. I remember thinking that artists who give themselves to the public at a definite hour daily haven't much time left for lover or husband, they usually marry for economic betterment, although in exceptionally rich natures all sorts of human treasure may be found. I was, of course, thinking of Juno and her connection with these young men.

As I sat there looking at those four I became aware of collusion among them, conspiracy, but my mind was busy with the dancer, and, as T. E. Lawrence, when he first met Feisal in the darkness

of his tent saw at last the figures of his companions when he recovered from the initial impact of the Arab's strange personality, so I suddenly saw Juno's friends—those who were with her now and the Russian who had taught her dancing, and the minister who had sent her *I Follow the Road*, the neurologist who had told her of Saint Augustine, and the saint himself. It was the nearest thing to a psychic experience I have ever had. These people spread out behind and around her like a fan and her roots showed below the blooming of her sad eyes and sensitive, brightly painted mouth. She was so strong, so vibrant, and withal so good, that I felt as if there were a visible radiation of divine purpose in such a woman, let life place her where it might. I sat silent; so did the others; it might have been the traditional Friends Meeting. Jock cleared his throat nervously and asked me, with a timid little twitter at the beginning of his request, if I would dedicate this hour to a quest of higher things. Everything flashed on me at once! I had been carefully planted in that room with those people, as a means of forcing me to some sort of devotional exhibition or presentment of what I believed and loved to think about. I could feel anger dart its thousand arrows through me, rage throttled me, their insolence confronted me like an evil presence. I got up and walked to the window, looking out on the skeletons of dead plants,

and the dreary fire escapes and stained walls of the stage abutment. I knew that if I spoke of knowing what they had done, of seeing through them, I should do it thoroughly. I believed, as I believe now, that I had every reason to be furious with them, but from the boiling elements of quarrel within me I gripped, "Be angry and sin not," and though I was angry, raging, I decided to behave as if I were not. The most hateful part of that was that it must appear to the conspirators as if they had succeeded with their conspiracy. One hates to be thought a dupe. I suffered, agonized, struggling with real fury, but I got back to my chair again and asked them what it was they were wanting of me and they said anything I cared to give. The red-brown young man showed me his book of forgiveness, but I could barely touch it. I began to speak of forgiveness nevertheless.

I talked to them as much as I dared about approach to God through Christ after that and tried to show them that in an act of forgiveness we find him. I was mindful of our lady of the churches and spent some time in refuting her idea—if it were hers—that forgiving a sin condones it and lowers moral standards. I felt that to forgive people for what they would probably or possibly do was, indeed, unjustifiable indulgence, flouting education and its benign ends.

"I think forgiveness may well be one's first con-

scious step toward Christ," I said, "possibly for all of us because we know that each of us is a little warped somewhere because of a tightly held grievance. To forgive is something definite, a beginning as marked as getting on the boat for a voyage; it isn't a mood, it isn't a volent idea, or a treasured memory; it is an act. I am not claiming for forgiveness that it is the only approach to Christ, for a child who has never been hurt has nothing to forgive, but has very often in spirit and in truth approached God. But real forgiveness, the wiping out of a specified wrong, is collaboration with Christ and brings to us his spirit, his union with God within the circumference of mutual recognition and the impulse to prayer, the realization of a divine and transforming power."

And the old gentleman beside me, his eyes aflame with interest, said "I don't believe a word of it," and then looked mortified. But I begged him not to be, I told him he mustn't believe anything without experimentation or reliable corroboration, and he answered, "It's true, I haven't that," and I went on to say that people didn't alone forgive as an initial effort of the mind seeking Christ. Forgiveness is the supreme expression and blossomed on the cross in the superb finality of human consciousness that was Christ's thinking and benign action. I asked them not to confuse the uttermost with the conscious practice of magnanimity, the early step

in the Christian way. I reminded them that Christ's disciples fell away from him when he told them to live on him, that he was spirit, and spirit was all, and that our age differed from his earthly period a little bit because we set such value on spirit in spite of the realism and riot of our times. The Caesarian spokesman in his earthly span extolled organized force, but the meek, those who turn the other cheek, we find now to be among the proudest. They are those who dare in strength of spirit to subject flesh to its ultimate pain, to flash their enduring minds as signal lights that men may cheerfully and consciously follow to new lives of achievement in line with individual aspiration.

"Always," I told them, "if one insists on Christ's being mere spirit and our association with him possible without essential physical or ecclesiastical ritual, there are people who fall away from us, and for that reason I think it is a mistake to emphasize what to my mind is fact to those who love ecclesiastical ritual and the physical routine of fasting and attitude. Leave them their crutches lest they fail to walk in the way. Let each of us accept what we can, always praying for more, and in all humility cease to think that we are comparable with those who walked the world with him and were welded by his immediate wisdom to be the first links in the chain that still draws us up. Let us say, 'Here or hereafter I may achieve a Christ-consciousness



so pure as that which he proclaimed as a spiritual eventuality, but today I need my routine to carry me along on the road. Permit your friends theirs! Always remembering that without power, your vehicle cannot move itself or you, and only in deeds is power. Forgive and you will be forgiven, knock, awake, seek. The romance of religion is completely lost to those who give Christ their supine assent."

They said what they thought about the approach to God and the beginnings of Christ-consciousness. I loved so their directness and simplicity, Jock's reverence for all churches, my dancer's fervor for hers, the noncommittal attitude of my older friend, the red-brown young man's wholehearted endorsement of forgiveness as a prelude to a better life, and his visible evasion of any expressed interest in churches.

As they talked together the red-brown young man came to me and showed me his thought pattern. It was a comprehensive drill beginning with secular instances of forgiveness and a sentence from Henry Kingsley's *Ravenshoe* recording Charles's forgiveness of Welter and Mackworth. Then he had a sentence from the prayer of the Marquise de La Fayette for the Jacobins who guillotined her mother and sister. ("Brand Whitlock's *Life of LaFayette* is the only book my mother ever read to the end," he said, confidentially.) He added

instances of parental fidelity, leading up to the prodigal son, which he had written in Latin because the story in English had gone stale for him and he loved to think of loving, understanding parents—one, of course, saw that he felt his had been neither loving nor understanding, so he set up a compensatory parental galaxy.

The hours had gone quickly. It was deep dusk. I was dining out, and early. I rose to go. "Say some prayer for us," they demanded. I shall never forget that moment. I stood silent before them, praying. Their aspiration was confluent, and I felt myself to be its narrow, shallow channel. "Say it aloud! Say it aloud!" they begged. There was a grand "Amen" quivering in them for any petition I might send out. Because together we had searched the silence for that inner voice which is the echo of God's will, I seemed as near to Christ as to them. I was frightened, but I said as bravely as I could: "Blessed Spirit, of whom we are aware, whose presence we cannot analyze, look upon us and know that we are waiting here to be informed and inspired. West of us, in slime and darkness, men are tunneling their way beneath the river to the farther shore, and from the far shore to our city's foreshore other men are pushing to meet them, that a way for thousands may be made. Let their meeting make concrete and contemporaneous our effort to plow through the limitations of hu-

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manity; thy effort to extend to us the illimitable horizons of divinity. Standing here, may we realize that visualization of Christ."

We were silent then, and without good-bys I left them.

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## **II**

### **APPEAL**



## APPEAL

### I

SOMETIMES an evening quite by oneself at the end of a busy day seems as thickly populated with impressions of people as preceding hours are physically surrounded by human beings. Memories of their association adhere, persist unbidden. I could not forget my lady of the churches who had sat quite near me at a concert that afternoon. I was always speculating as to whether she sincerely felt forgiveness to be subversive of moral standards, or had read that it was in an old-fashioned defense of the Puritans. I had not spoken with her, but her face stood out against her own background, tight lipped, suffering. It had been a happy afternoon. Jane had been with me and we had heard the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra play Schubert's C Major Symphony as no other orchestra can, because, I suppose, of its superlative woodwinds. Jane had become interested in music, I had given her records of some of its highspots. I owed her that, for I never see her that I don't learn something new in a flash of the light that lightens the world. In the nature of her calling I see her seldom, but when we can meet we make a great holiday of it.

Although I was sitting alone I was with those two women retrospectively. My church lady looked self-conscious and on parade, as if concerts were ceremonies at which one's demeanor must be rather rigid, but Jane was merely herself, listening. She was always serene now and quietly purposeful, increasingly humorous and increasingly impersonal. That puzzled me in her, for at the beginning of our friendship she had talked of people incessantly and had wanted to be with them, but now her mind was furnished with specialized information and sunny spiritual ideas, which—like other basic things—can be either sunny or somber. She read—and reads—books on religion of a type that does not attract me, but she distills from them concepts that are evocative and inspiring. She is like a student who gets a good education at a second-rate college. Then my mind would swing to the lady of the churches who grieved one with her disapproving aloofness, an attitude that I could see she meant to maintain. Between nine and ten I had just told myself that my vanity was suffering because I couldn't make a friend of her when I learned that there was a gentleman downstairs who wanted to see me because I had left something of value in his car.

At first I thought one of my brothers was bent on teasing me, but on second thought I believed they'd do it by telephone at the end of a busy day.



"What a kind man to return anything at this hour! Whose car have I been in? I haven't missed anything."

I said he might come up to my apartment, and I heard the door opened and the rustle of a removed overcoat. The visitor who entered was the dancer's old new friend.

He was impeccably arrayed in dinner clothes and looked, as he has since told me he felt, extremely sheepish.

"You are kind to bring it to me," I cried, "but what is it I left behind me?"

He sat down on a chair facing me and looked—I am proud to say—distinctly afraid of me.

"It was an idea," he declared stoutly.

He didn't say any further word of explanation and I considered the possibility of his being a madman but he looked eminently sane though very uncomfortable. I began to feel the same way.

"I am seventy years old," he began, "in good health and active business—too active, with all this federal interference complicating the plans of honest men. I came here tonight because I find myself pursuing a new train of thought."

I congratulated him. "No one is old who does that," I said.

"I'm not sure that congratulation is in order," he observed, thoughtfully. His puzzled eyes rested on me as if I were a printed page. I was silent

because I believed he had a program and was presenting his problem in a prearranged way.

"If I could only get started, I'd tell you all about it," he cried in exasperation.

I burst out laughing. "If I only knew how to start you I should," I told him.

"I'm embarrassed about coming in here like this," he announced, miserably.

"I think it's quite amusing," I said, "so don't fuss about that."

"What I have to say is personal."

"Then I shall regard it as confidential."

He nodded as if we had struck a good bargain, but he waited some moments before he began. When he did so, I saw how carefully he had prepared his recital; I could measure the depth of the groove it had made by passing so often through his mind.

"I am essentially a business man," he said, "the silent partner of ————" he named a company of which I had often heard.

"When I was twenty-five I married a lovely girl and we were happy for three years. When life was really developing for us—we were going to have a child—she caught cold and died. As a personality she evades my memory but as an experience the recollection of our marriage is a bright spot."

I could see that my visitor was no sentimentalist and I rather believed that what he said of himself

and his marriage was true of many others who wouldn't think of acknowledging it.

"Business was a great resource to me then—what I can call a blessing. Only one or two people tried to treat my trouble religiously, said things about heaven and what not, but they didn't click. Paradise has no geographical existence and I was a practical man and without church affiliation."

"How do you account for that?" I inquired.

"I never tried to before this minute. But I suppose," he said, "when the intense conviction of evangelism in the seventies—there was a preacher called Moody—died down into convention, a widespread hypocrisy cropped out and parents wanted to keep their children away from it. No one asked me to go to church who seemed to me the nobler for churchgoing, and I was Utilitarian, I wanted to be better. I read books about law instead."

"I shouldn't," I observed very mildly, "have hit on them as a substitute."

He nodded and looked long at me, as if trying to decipher me, a curious effect that I often find in him.

"God," he continued very shyly, "has often seemed to me the only possible author of the sunrises and sunsets I have seen in our Western country, but I've never before thought of Christ as expressing his spirit to the minds of men. In fact, I've looked on churches as productive openings

for cheats, like faith healers and mediums and what we used to call 'Gospel mouthers' and 'Bible bellowers.' To my mind such people were all out of the dark pocket of fraud."

"They are in some instances," I agreed.

His baffled glance again sought mine.

"You may be right about these things you talk about," he declared, grudgingly. "I don't say you are or aren't. But your ideas concern me. They have invaded my mind and occupy it. I can't tell what has become of my reason or where my judgment stands in the matter at all. I am thought by some people to possess judgment."

I thought his last observations very interesting and sat there trying to examine them, but after one of his many glances at the clock he spoke again before I had really taken hold of them.

He said: "For instance, I did a queer thing the other night. I so much wanted to read the New Testament that—as it was past seven and the book stores all closed—I went to a hotel and took a room there where I could read a Gideon Bible. Do you know what I mean by a Gideon Bible?"

I told him I had seen one in a hotel in Buffalo and had read in it about the Society which distributes them. "But," I added, "you could have borrowed the cook's, probably."

"I tried to," he answered, "but she's a Roman Catholic and didn't have one."

"Did you want to read some special part?" I demanded.

"Yes. The 'Who-do-you-think-I-am?' part. That question is right up to me at this moment; it's as pertinent a question today as in the past, once one is interested in it."

"Have you been able to answer it?"

He was silent for a long time. I think he had forgotten there was anyone with him and I would not for anything have disturbed him by reminding him that I was there. At last he looked at me and shook his head—meaning "No." He looked at the clock again and compared it with his watch.

"I hope I'm not keeping you up," he said, politely. I shook my head—meaning "No." We had, I feared, arrived at a deadlock.

But he had more to say in his low, unhurried voice.

"I am broad-minded to the point of indifference," he assured me, "and some years ago when I went to India I read about the religions over there, and they seemed about as good—or as bad—as Christianity, except that I felt there was more real worship because fewer words. These third-rate monologues these pastors get off on Sundays would empty the churches if there weren't something else—some imponderable—to fill them. My position is this—I can't get rid of my recent impressions. I am either crazy or actually aware of a

power that is Christ. I have irrational impulses of worship and I find statements in the New Testament that blind me with the light they throw on life; they illuminate possibilities, and in these sayings I see a central figure more plainly each time this enlightenment occurs."

"Will you tell me one of those sayings?" I asked.

I don't think he wanted to, but after one of the awful and lengthy pauses that fell on us he said:

"Christ said, 'No one has ever at any time seen God.' If Christ had been a fake, I think he would have claimed that people have seen him; I'm sure he would. That statement appeals to me, comforts me, it very nearly convinced me of reality in all his claims."

"Why?" I exclaimed.

"Can't you see how sincere that was," he pleaded, "how exactly true it must be? And can't you realize how all fakes tell you all about God as if they had counted the buttons on his waistcoat as they sat opposite him in his office? Don't you see the miracle of power in a mind that could declare that and yet put the hearts of men in the grip of divine forces compelling throngs to worship, not him the leader, but the unseen magnet that drew him, to his redemptive destiny?"

I sat still as a mouse listening to him, loving what he said as he pleaded for his vision. I was afraid the telephone would ring. "When Paul saw

the altar to the Unknown God, he made his point—he knew God; the Greeks knew of him. I sympathize with those Greeks, but building an altar would be no satisfaction to me——”

He stopped, but I was amazed at the vibration of intensity in his flat Western voice. His face glowed for a moment like one's idea of a saint's face. I couldn't speak to him; I was deeply interested, but I groped along the road behind him. He took a little book from his pocket and opened it.

“Referring to your observations on forgiveness,” he said, relapsing into a most businesslike manner, “I'd like to get you to amplify them before I check up on them.”

It is appalling to be “checked up on” in matters of this kind.

“How can you do that?” I demanded.

“By trying to base acts on your statements and noting results. I am, with a view to that, formulating experiments. I am not sure I shall perform them, but I can conceive of them.”

“What's the good of that if they're to come to nothing?” I cried.

He didn't answer me, and I took the book he offered, at whose very beginning, under the caption “Foreshore to Farshore,” I saw the poor little prayer we had put out in the dancer's dressing room. What he had written himself about forgiveness is just what I believe. “If he is the door,

forgiveness is its latch," he had written in his precise stiff characters.

I told him how it stirred and blessed me to find such living interest in him, and I suggested to him a way of deepening the chance for Christ's thought to flow toward him. It was meant, perhaps, too much for him alone for me to put it down here, but he seemed glad to have it, took back the little book and wrote it down on one of its pages. I was afraid of coming between him and the power that was growing in him; I didn't want to dilute it with a favorite opinion or emotion of my own. We sat very quietly, saying nothing at all but thinking together through Christ to God. His face grew impassive again, he rose from his chair and when he spoke his voice had grown cold.

"I am incapable of leading a Christian life in extenso," he declared. "The church services that I love I shall solemnly attend. But I can perform one or two acts solely for Christ's sake—if I choose to. I am not perfectly sure that I shall perform them."

"Why not?" I was terribly disappointed—I needn't have been.

"They involve considerable effort and inconvenience," he explained, "so I do not impulsively bind myself to amend my life although I plainly see where it might be amended."

He smiled vaguely, peered at me in the puzzled



way that often changed to a shrewd and thrusting glance, and departed with a formal bow. We hadn't shaken hands—he was too preoccupied—or gone through any friendly formula of farewell.

I sat on for a long time thinking of him; the end of his road was plain before me, greater and ever greater knowledge of what the dancer had disclosed to him in the first instance. In an old commentary on Edmund Spenser I had picked up in a friend's library the day before, there was a notice of the commentator in which he was called "a window on the Word." It had seemed to me quaint then, but apt now, as I thought of Saint Augustine's votary and then embraced in my thinking all the people who had sat together in her ugly dressing room.

When I heard the clock strike I was startled at the hour, and my prayer as I closed my eyes was something like: "Please do what is best with me. I want to pray for so many people that I have no thoughts for prayers for myself."

Early next morning I took cards from the card catalogue of people I had seen and talked with, who were definitely experimenting with Christ's power. I was afraid of scattering and not going through with them to an informatory finish. I believed that those who tried to train their minds by discipline, the repetition of productive thoughts and evocative images, would help me to help still

others, but that if I just chatted here and there with any seeking minds, I should not have any increased knowledge of mental processes, just a pleasant recollection of more and more people. For that reason I had begun a card catalogue of those attempting an approach to God.

The cards I took out were the red-brown young man's, Jock's, his long friend's, the dancer's, the aged and well-to-do Westerner's and my church lady's. I could not despair of her when I recalled the promise of our first interview. Rather I despaired of myself; how had I blocked her approach? how shut her in? how limited her? And then I opened a queer letter arrived in the morning's mail. I have destroyed it because I hated it as a record, but I have its writer's written permission to quote it from memory. It ran very like the following:

"If I were not drunk, I should not be writing you this letter, but I want you to know that my experience with religion shows me that alcohol does not make God recessive. Drunk or sober I realize his existence although I cannot say it does me much good personally. Christ is his voice and I accept much in his story that reason cannot justify. I have always known these things and now and then I strike a blow for my conviction. A friend of mine, having met with an accident, is in hospital and asked me to read your book aloud to him.

I'd like to tell you sometime why it's a good book, and I understand your feeling about church. It isn't that the church isn't good enough for you; it is that it isn't good enough for Christ."

When I read the signature I was dumb with amazement, but I loved him for what he said about my position toward the church. The young man who wrote that letter was an agreeable, bibulous person with a very good income, irreproachable forebears, and the entrée into the best there is in the way of human companionship anywhere. I knew his parents and I knew that his father worried over him from the standpoint of health. His mother was completely nonplussed by him and deliberately forgot him when she could. I wrote up my impressions of our elder friend and then I sat down to think over that drinking boy. I wasn't able to cope with him. As I sat still in my own room I felt I was being shown that I wasn't up to a duty like keeping this man up. I wrote a card for him and hoped someone or something would occur to me that would mean his definite improvement.

Someone to whom I had spoken of rules of the road had called my catalogued friends my guinea pigs and the red-brown young man had exulted in that title. He was much more than amused by it, he was actually gratified. I called him on the telephone.

"Would you like a guinea pig of your own?" I inquired.

He didn't know.

"Come round here," I said, "and I'll make up your mind for you."

He was with me very soon, and we had our breakfast together. He agreed with me that I shouldn't be very successful in dealing with the young man, largely because I couldn't meet him on his own ground.

"He wants to snap out of it," the red-brown young man assured me. "He would never have written to you if he didn't."

I didn't show him the letter itself because I think that's a tremendous liberty to take with anyone unless one has permission, but I found he knew its writer slightly and he wrote his name across another card and we put them in a little box of their own.

Today I rejoice in their records and we are all thankful they were kept as they were, with dates and interviews and acts set down with some few comments and one or two predictions. The thoughts and thought patterns, the return in associative ideas, the impulses and instances of divine direction are tabulated and signed. Otherwise I should hesitate to write these human histories that glow with divine recognitions and burn with religious expression.

Some of them have paid high for their high correspondences and others have received them with added gain of all sorts and no losses in funds and friends. I cite the dancer to whom Christianity was an open sesame to a circle far beyond her reach otherwise, but not deliberately sought like the church lady's associations. I think the elderly Westerner has done valiant battle for his sympathies, and the long young man—no matter how much respect his work and purpose bring him from friends—is regarded as mad by his mother, a fake by his father's second wife, and by their husbands, the two men of his family, as a blistering enigma and a reproach to them because he spends so little money. Yet all of them bless the world of opportunity in which they live, the intimacy of joint effort and study and with the minimum of talk and maximum of action believe intensely in teaching and leave preaching to those who are called to it. Their opinions, even their convictions, are widely diversified but they are basically in that accord which is Christ. They unite in one thing, however—that no one can be effectively Christian today without a social program. "Even to be a hermit is to follow an antisocial program and *ipso facto* become a social item," they say. They study opportunities upon which to spend their time and money and they feel that it is in their normal activities, the theater, the graduate school, the offices of a

great company, that the contagion of Christianity should be permitted to spread. They decided at this time, that those who have vital sympathies with Christ and his philosophy associate themselves with others who have it too, instead of carrying it to those who lack it, where tact and courage are badly needed. We spent an evening on this point of view and I think it ended in their feeling that association with like-minded and worshiping fellow Christians was a great spiritual luxury, and indulgence in it was a matter of degree; up to a certain point it was stimulating, beyond that it became a dangerous enervation.

I lose touch with them now and again or am associated with one rather than all for a season, but whenever the pressure of the material world slackens, the essentials that control them creep to my feet like a rising tide and bring me new phases of our experimental experiences. It seems to us all sometimes as if we stood on a shore of material things and looked over the sea of spiritual essentials, wondering if anyone will devise a philosophic craft in which we may travel to a port of certainties about the many things mankind is interrogating, contemplating, and rejecting. It may be that certainty is too static for human development and that minds develop best in uncertainty, that trying to find truth is better than leaning hard on demonstrable fact.

I think they all do believe that change is the matrix of disciplined character even though the unchanging essentials of inner vision, love, aspiration, the image of sacrifice (which they call substitution) be resplendent in anticipation as in result. We cannot materialize such things even in detailed social programs, for we cannot reduce them to the scale of life as we live it; they are too vast, too permeating, too universal. We cannot domesticate the sun in its fullest force, and without it who would choose to be outdoors? We cannot contain the universality of Christ; prejudice expels him, but what life is healthy or effective unless somewhere in it, his actuation plays its part?

As I look over the cards and the red-brown young man's minutes, I think these things were seen from where we were on the road at this time and point of our journey; they look better now.

Fully five weeks passed before we came together again, and I purposely refrained from asking the red-brown young man about Dan, his alcoholic guinea pig. I was very interested to find drunkenness was ineffectual in quenching religious longing or in diminishing the brilliance of God's reality. I sometimes turned over the possibility of his having written me that just to make himself interesting, but from what I heard of him by chance, I considered that unlikely.

## II

I received a note from the long young man saying that he had a very few days off from his work and would like us all to dine out at his mother's apartment. "This experimental living has brought us so close to one another and to its central figure that I feel we are ready for further progress, that we have more driving power and should encourage one another to use it," he wrote. I canceled the trivial arrangements I had made for that evening and spent a few late hours of the Sunday afternoon thinking within the mind of Christ as far as I was able, holding my friends up to his light and wishing it might shine on us all and that I might not obscure it with any egotism or intellectual stubbornness, or the claim that any part of our technique or aspect of our determination was new. I find in the world of religious people—officially religious people—a great desire for something new, and we feel that if they would look about them in the world, they would find so many opportunities in new conditions to which they might apply proven forces that their desire for novelty would be met without hunting for new phases of divine expression in the churches they serve.

I had no idea that a wonderful and informatory hour lay before us as I dressed to dine out. I didn't even know if all of them would be there



and, released from its effort to gain light, my mind had a wonderful sense of ease and suppleness. I remember saying to a friend of mine who was dining in the apartment house I live in and who had come early on the chance of finding me for a few minutes' chat, that dinner seemed to me the one civilized function in our rowdy world.

She agreed that being punctual was a wholesome discipline, and I said that perhaps the thought of repletion disposed people to courtesy. She answered that being bathed and formally dressed for once in the twenty-four hours had its effect on any human being who has existed in haste and the same gown from early morning till dark, and that was the sort of thing we were saying as she drove me to the apartment house designated in my invitation. She didn't want to be too early for her party; I didn't want to be late for mine.

I called back to her after I'd left her car, "Be careful, it's snowing."

She is not a very careful driver and I was wishing she wouldn't drive herself in city streets. I stood under the awning watching her till the lights let her turn the corner, hoping she wouldn't hurry because she had taken time to drive me to my engagement. My thoughts were with her as I was shot up without stop in a very decorative elevator. We went past floor after floor, arriving in a mirrored stronghold of "art d'époque." Two pictured long-

necked gazelles peered at me from the strange depths of a forest of slender tree trunks, and a lot of chromium chairs interrupted my view of them. After my coat had been taken, I passed through a long room that I now know very well into a place so lovely that it took my breath away.

It was ultra modern and as I looked at it and the people in it, "my words shall not pass away" seemed reflected in every inch of its beauty. We were there to consider them in a room inconceivable at the beginning of the World War. The corners of the long narrow room were windows placed high, and along the intervening walls French windows gave on a narrow balcony hemmed in by a protective grille by Hunt Diedrich of slim quadrupeds of metal looking in on us from the snow-spotted night. These long windows alternated with groups of tropical plants. There were no lace curtains but allamanda vines of triumphant yellow blossoms and shining foliage with the rarer pink variety spread themselves in spaces of gray stone. A pool of blue Zanzibar waterlilies cut off a corner, wonderful and tiny ferns grew in glass boxes. The sofas and chairs were of shining chromium like the entrance-hall furniture, the floor was of stone and the view from the many windows was of blown sky and infinitude.

"This hideout," the long young man explained, "is mother's. She's gone to some Caribbean coun-

try to see an orchid. Her husband is away until tomorrow. It's a little like having church at a flower show, isn't it?"

I said what I thought, that it was lovely, and they told me they felt I might not like it. I have never been able to determine why. Our old young Westerner, the dancer, the red-brown young man, and his guinea pig—Dan—and I were the party. We ate our dinner like normal human beings and Dan looked first at one and then at another very wistfully. We talked normally about one another's affairs. Our old new friend felt there was entirely too much unnecessary litigation, "insincere litigation," he called it once and presently he said he had some of his own on his "rather soiled hands." The dancer was leaving—some time—to open in a much-advertised show in London; she said she might get word to leave any time now, perhaps this week, perhaps a month hence. "Everything is rehearsed but the principals," she told us, "but there are often delays."

Dan came to life but once, he spoke about the terrific number of rackets in the business world, that were light-heartedly practiced because no one had the courage to challenge them.

"If I had a moral ambition," he told us, "it would be to become a perfectly honest business man."

"You can be," the Westerner told us; "a perfectly

honest politician is rare, I guess, but I've known many an honest man in business."

The dancer was asked about the theatrical world, and she said that if a manager were for you, all the lies would be on your side; if he were against you, the lies would be against you too. But there were apt to be lies. "We dancers and singers aren't in the game for association with managers," she said; "at first we're in it to get food, then fame, and then for the thing itself, to express all one knows of beauty in a brief and concentrated act."

Any set of diners might have talked the same way except that there were no anecdotes, no funny stories, or gossip. I think we all felt the tension of our coming search.

Our host took us back to the room with the corner windows and allamanda vines. It had been rearranged while we dined. There was a straight-backed chair behind a little table in which our red-brown young man took his place and a sofa had been drawn up facing it with an armchair on either side. There was solemnity and reverence in the air, and we sat quiet for a few moments until our red-brown young man said that the Westerner would repeat the "Sandhog" prayer. Without any written reminder, quite simply and unaffectedly our older friend repeated the words I had groped for when, in that ugly theatrical dressing room, they had asked me to pray.

Then there was a crackling of papers, the settling of a pair of spectacles on the dancer's shapely nose, and our host read a closely memorized summary—minutes really—of our last meetings. He asked us if we agreed to them, after which we initialed them in assent to their validity as records.

"What follows," the red-brown young man told us, "is an experimentation with forgiveness that our dancer made. It has brought her great happiness, and other people too. She hasn't any self-consciousness in telling us about it and gives it to us to do with as we like. She is fortunate in being able to be so outspoken as her story involves no one who wouldn't wish to be identified."

I could see how deeply interested the Westerner was, but in spite of what had been said the dancer was nervous at the beginning of her story.

"What I have to tell," she said, "will sound like nothing much perhaps, but in its passing it was tremendous. You all know that my first realization of Christ's power and presence brought me an astonishing happiness. I really walked on air and said, 'If you are for me, to the point of this transforming revelation, who can be against me?' The stained, defaced walls of the theater fell away like Jericho's at the tone of trumpets, and vistas of love and service stretched up before me to the ultimate brilliance of an eternity in greater knowledge of God."

"I wouldn't call that nothing much," the Westerner interrupted dryly, "it sounds to me like everything."

"At this time an act was being collected for me by Mr. Blank—my present act; the pay was very good, and I myself was to choose—an unusual privilege—the four girls who were to double for four singing rôles in the dancing finale. The dance is, as you've all seen, a masquerade, and the four dancers, still hooded, emerge with a mist backstage while I alone come forward and remove my hood. We had a lovely set, and you'll agree that the mechanical handling is swell, but we couldn't get four girls of a size who could dance. We were absolutely stopped. The girls offering who had the physical strength—it demands stamina to do that finale—hadn't the matured skill for the turns and timing. No one wanted to cut the dance, for my contract was signed and I'd have to be paid; besides, the music was sure fire. Mr. Blank rushed off to the Coast to see a group of girls who had been in Club shows, rotary entertainments, and in movies. They were said to be excellent.

"He brought them back by plane for my O. K. I have never seen from the standpoint of theater more lovely human beings."

We agreed in a general murmur.

"They needed very little paint, they were opaquely white like milk, their hair is perfectly

natural, blue black, and with a shining quality that carries to the eye like patent leather. They had a very proud carriage and perfect modern figures, slim but not flat. They danced like waves of the sea, a little on the acrobatic side, which is all to the good."

The Westerner cleared his throat impatiently and our red-brown young man sped him a warning glance, saying tactfully, "I wish I had a profession I enjoyed as much as you do yours!"

The dancer nodded absently, recalling the scene of which she meant to tell us.

"I was just going to tell Mr. Blank to sign them when he 'tore' it. He said to me: 'You're visibly impressed. They're Armenians—all four—at least, their parents are.' I was rigidly against them when I heard that.

" 'You don't know what you're letting us in for,' I told him. 'I admit they might be worked in, but no Armenians for me—they're too unreliable. I've had experience with them and I know. Have you?' He said he hadn't. I let him see that I was firm in my dislike, and after he had looked from me to them three or four times he mumbled something about letting them down easy, and the last I saw of them he was piloting them in to an expensive restaurant for a meal. I felt triumph—like a physical sensation—as I sat at home, I felt I had paid off an old debt, and although I didn't

want to recall the way it had been incurred, it paraded to and fro in my memory all the time I was exercising, when I was writing to my mother, or having my hair shampooed. I felt restless and ruthless, but I had no idea that I was living in a mental state where Christ could not reach to me. A colored woman we all love dearly was cleaning in my rooms. She is very much interested in religion, and I remember saying to her that I had heard one joined forces with Christ—merged with him, met him in actuality—every time one practiced forgiveness. 'But,' I said, 'I have nothing to forgive. Yet I approach Christ often, I rest in him. There are more ways than one.' "

That woman said that no one lives, not even a baby, who has nothing to forgive.

"I can't eat before the show, and I'm ravenous after it, so I was very sorry when Mr. Blank asked me for supper at ten-fifteen when my feature is off and my make-up too. I knew he would take me to the hotel where he lives, where we would dine slowly on rich food. I felt he would be hurt if I didn't stay and chat for a while. I didn't want him to be upset about the Armenians, so I went. He had as other guests a producer whose opinion everyone respects, and his charming wife. It is a great compliment when such men bring their wives with them to a meal like ours, and I was made happy by such an attention, but after a few mo-



ments I saw why it had been arranged, for at once I was lectured about Armenians and their good qualities. I resented that, but I said nothing, just stiffened into silence and knew to my satisfaction that I was making them very uncomfortable by my complete lack of response. I also knew that I wasn't doing myself any good, for pleasing this man and his wife would have meant something to me. But I wanted to be like that and I left them almost at once, even although I knew I should be criticised. Mr. Blank tried to cajole me but I was determined and deeply angry. I was within my contract rights but unreasonable as to exercising them.

"Now we come to the reason of all this, that wasn't perfectly clear to me then; time had obscured it, and the turning away from the pain its remembrance caused me had helped time's process. The reason for it begins with a quarrel poor mother got into with an Armenian family in the town next ours. It was about some furniture they lent us and said we had damaged. Mother had no money to pay for its repair, but every few days they would ask her for it. Trying to collect it became their habitual activity and mother's torture. It wasn't much, they said; it was more than we had, we answered.

"I danced one evening at the 'smoker' of a club in their town for twenty-five dollars. That was a

lot of money for them to give and for me to gain. As I left the clubhouse to get the bus to go home I met the young son of that Armenian family, a fat, slow-spoken boy. He lumbered up to me and demanded my fee to discharge mother's debt. He said the money wasn't mine legally but his mother's. At the most a small part of it would have settled her claim. I told him so, and he spat on me.

"The heat of that shameful slow-moving wet on my face nearly killed me. I never wanted to live at home after that; it made me feel that I belonged to low people. I was glad when I married, to be going far away. I couldn't talk about it to anyone. I made the girls who were with me promise not to speak of it so it never 'came out,' as people say. Although I knew rough life and low ways well, that being spat on transcended what I knew. I would cross the street rather than pass an Armenian after that, and I bought cheap carpets for my house rather than borrow a friend's who offered them, when I found they were stored at an Armenian's. Because of all that I didn't want those girls in my act. I was savagely against them. I couldn't read as I had read, I lay in bed filled with a striking impulse, restless, pained with a hate that swallowed me up. But I went to my lovely little church on Sunday because I felt that not to go would be to take a definite stand against Christ,

and I believe to feel his acknowledgment of us we must make acknowledgment of him. I don't ask anyone else to believe it but Saint Augustine implies it and it is true to me."

I was tremendously sympathetic with the simplicity and sincerity of this story. The dancer's face was enkindled and her attitude, plastic and eager, was as unaffected as the flow of her words. The others, like me, were leaning toward her, anxious to hear it all.

"Church that morning was perfectly beautiful. The sacred costumes were remote from worldly cut, there were holy words, sacrifice and sacrament, covenant and crucifix, beautiful words and angelic singing, the gestures of the priest and the worshipers, the bent heads and knees—so touching in old or infirm people, the many hands signing the cross before prayer—ah, it was all so perfect that I could scarcely bear the beauty of it. I said to the lady next to me that it was wonderful to be a part of such a service, but I didn't realize that the service was to become a part of me.

"That happened when the sermon came. I remember that it had a kind of title like 'Ennobling Ignominy,' but it was a cleverer, more striking, title than that. At first we were told that Christians ought not to allow themselves arrogant manners, for 'Manners makyth man' was an old saying but forever a true one. Not alone because arro-

gance was bad for us who practiced it, but because few people could accept insult without reactionary sin. That was gone into very deeply and we were shown the rarity of dignified behavior under neglect or rudeness. Then came my part: the priest said we mustn't think that because none of us is called on in a gentler today to endure the indignity of being spat upon as our Saviour was—I realize that none of us have that experience in common with him—that we don't writhe under other and manifold forms of contempt.

“I very nearly cried out, ‘But I have been spat on too!’ and I could have kissed the stones of that dear church for the blessing that fell on my face there; it was beyond all estimate, beyond all human reason. I cannot tell anyone how ennobled I was or how stupid I knew myself to be that I had not caught before the glory and likeness of our contumely.

“I cannot feel that this sermon was anything but a coincidence Christ aimed at me, an interlinking of mind and mind, a thought transference, that put me in the category of the sparrow who cannot fall to the ground without divine cognizance.”

Our eyes were fixed on her in silence until our long young man interrupted eagerly, “You mustn't stop without telling the practical outcome of the coincidence.”

The dancer looked at the Westerner, who said:

"If you like to tell it, go ahead. I had very little to do with it."

"I telephoned Mr. Blank when I got back to my place. He was just awake and cross, having worked all night on the script of our show. I knew I mustn't seem sentimental or sloppy." (She was kind enough to say that I had put her off lush utterances, and I was grateful for that word of recognition.)

"‘On second thought,’ I told him in a cold voice and very matter-of-fact manner, ‘we’d better not give those Armenians a miss. They’re dancers and the others who applied were plumb dreadful. He screeched with joy.’"

The red-brown young man said: "Well it's nice he was pleased, but tell us what I helped you write out. Go ahead."

The Westerner hastily and from his heart advised skipping any technical descriptions of dances, and the very long young man observed with a pointed glance at his one-time ranch partner that other people beside himself loved church. This helped me to realize that we retained our individualities in spite of new and higher interests.

The dancer took up some typewritten sheets from the little table and initialed them. "The story passes from me now," she said. "I only want to say once more that what people call coincidence I believe to be Christ's method in guiding us.

There is timing in God's providence as there is in group dancing and that is coincidence. And one more thing: forgiveness was Christ's gift to me. I didn't buy it for myself."

### III

I could see that the narrative now came to our older friend and that he didn't like to talk. He opened a case near him and took a bit of paper from it very reluctantly and then said that he had been conscious of these Armenians before now. "As a matter of fact," he began, "I have some business friends who think that meeting theatrical people in New York is seeing life as kings see it. I took them to see our friend dance and afterward she was good enough to come with us to Pierre's for supper. She brought two theatrical and two church friends with her. All through supper they talked of Edwin and Wilkes Booth, and one of my business associates spoke of his father's remembrance of Othello with Salvini and I think Booth too, and he said because of that he always went to see it; he knew it by heart and the only thing that ever surprised him in it was the different shades of make-up Othello played in, every shade," he told us, "from chocolate to an ugly yellow opacity 'like a dirty Armenian.' That's how we got on Armenians, and our friend here told of the lovely milk white of some of them; and then she told us that

the first one she'd known couldn't hold down a job for long and was always in trouble, and that although he was the least liked of the people she'd known in early girlhood in her home town, he was the only person she was at all in touch with through one of the Armenian girls in her act. 'Armenians all know each other. This boy is in Saint Louis; and I'd like to help him if I knew how.'

"After the others left we got together on that young man. I wanted to help any friend of hers and when I went to Saint Louis, I took his address from one of the dancers. I found him, hungry and discouraged and strong as a young bull. He had no intelligence; he'd tried to be a prize fighter but was too cowardly, poor chap! to interest backers. His history was a long slide down from cheap to cheaper lodging. It occurred to me that a partner of ours who is interested in a large hospital had been trying for years to get just such a person to act under supervision in carrying stretchers, assisting the doorman, lifting furniture, etc., always under supervision. Strength, gently applied, muscle, but no initiative, was what was desired. I found the place open and put him on the train after making him supply me with a list of his many and pitiably small debts. So far he has filled the bill. He opens the door of the private patient pavilion for four hours daily, he remembers faces, and is a

most imposing figure in livery, or uniform, as he calls it. Unemployed, this exceptionally strong man was in danger of becoming a public charge. In any position demanding brain he would have been a danger to himself and others. He is interested and happy without a trace of the impulse that brought him first to our friend's notice."

The red-brown young man glowed with enthusiasm. "Forgiveness became a constructive social item, and I wish I could say something that would formulate it."

I told them it made me think of George Meredith's figure of the stone thrown in the water. They didn't remember it so I repeated,

"Life is but the pebble cast,  
Deeds the circle, growing."

The Westerner initialed his bit of paper and the long young man made us a brief but sincere speech about the Anglican Church, what it meant to him and could or should mean to all of us. One could see that the dancer agreed with all he said except perhaps his observations about not holding any religious opinions or subscribing to any mental discipline unless sanctioned by a priest. He and the dancer always said "priest," while the rest of us said "clergyman," with the exception of the Westerner, who said "preacher."

"I should like to ask," Dan spoke and very seri-



ously, "if our long young man consulted his priest about having us here tonight. It's his party, isn't it?"

The answer given in reply to this was direct and manly. He said ~~he had~~, and that he had given him *I Follow the Road* to read. He had found nothing new in it and had said that if our long young man had kept in touch with his church, he would need no such writing to bring him to a realization of God. He then looked a little unhappy, but he continued courageously. The priest had asked him to get me to write on a piece of paper the definition of a thought pattern. I asked for a pen and someone handed me a little notebook. I wrote, "Our thought patterns are a sequence of chosen ideas or mental pictures deliberately repeated and duly recorded as an effort to approach the Spirit and presence of Christ."

The long young man's relief was evident, and I wondered if his priest had suggested that I would be unable to define a thought pattern. I felt hurt, and grateful to the red-brown young man when he seemed a little resentful. It took me a few moments to get hold of myself, but in such an atmosphere, one could. It was getting late and what I had hoped to hear was something about the objective quality of prayer, and I wanted to say to them that we mustn't regard ourselves as a group but as friends, representing other groups. They asked

me to say to them all of what I had in mind, which was:

"It would be good if each of us looked upon these talks we've had together as returns to the first brilliance of realization from wherever its light has led us, and as opportunities to pool the beauties of new life and our best thoughts nurtured and grown in correspondence with Christ, always omitting argument and accentuating experience. For instance, if some one of us can't accept our dancer's coincidental convictions, don't try to argue her out of them; interpret them for yourself until you have made her experience the soil of beauty of your own growing. If one of us feels that there is too much priestly domination in our long young man's mind, let us realize that he has a mind, beyond ours in scientific training, and a conscience about how he uses it. I think that each of us has brought his individuality to Christ and asked him to wear it as a modern garment, but we mustn't forget that, figuratively speaking, he looks a little different in the cloak of your character to what he does arrayed in my appreciations and prejudices. If in music we had but one tone, we could never achieve harmony—unison prolonged makes monotony—so let's be thankful for the variety of expression we give to our common sympathy."

I asked them if there was any dissent about meeting Christ in our acts of forgiveness, and there was

none; but when it was suggested that some report of our progress toward prayer be given, each of us waited on the other for the first word. That was understandable and an evidence of sincerity, for the supreme intimacy of the life of the mind, beyond all rational, human intimacies, is the sense of the listening ear to those who pour themselves out in aspiration. We agreed that a physical result from prayer—health, financial betterment, restored memory, reformation of errant children—might be given those who are very near to God and unclogged channels of his power, but to us who traveled the road such gifts might or might not be entrusted. If they were withheld, it had not to do with any limitation but our own. They all set aside a time every day to reach out toward God, to meet him in Christ's mind, and after such times, they felt impelled toward some special act or person, precisely as those who have preceded them from the Greeks to our own time have done. I asked them not to read books about prayer but to examine recorded prayers, and each to choose some one to study who had been gripped in a great crisis—no matter of what kind—trying to reshape the form of his aspiration and outline the nature of his request. I did this because I believed that in this spiritual exercise each would find a sure echo of his own need, unconsciously and sincerely formulated, whereas if he wrote down such things as

his own contribution, he would shrink from himself and hide his heart's desire, as the best of us will. And again, to study prayer as a human activity, without comment or the cliché of any church, is to find it a general basic impulse of all lands and times, establishing it as an instinct rather than a custom, and every instinct connotes its own satisfaction.

We said "Good night" to one another as from another land. We felt we had come back from a stimulating holiday and its impressions hung round us, making the flowers and the chromium chairs and painted trees and graceful animals seem unreal and symbols that we could not read, much less interpret. The young people looked lovely with their serene faces and easy movements of perfect strength. Our older friend drove me home again and said that he would be back in the late summer—he was on his way South now. He asked me if I should be where he could see me.

"At that time I expect to be at a conference of arts in ———." I named a mid-Western city.

"That's within fifty miles of my birthplace," he told me. "I've a house there, inherited from an uncle. I go there sometimes but I always feel remote from life there. I'm the last of our tribe and what to do with that house and garden is a problem." He told me what hotel to stay at, at the conference, wrote the name on his card for me and

said he'd write for my reservation. "I'm known there," he said.

A wild snowstorm was raging now, swirling round corners, so that I sat for a moment with him in the car while he finished what he told me he wanted to say.

"I haven't come to the point where Christ comforts me," he said. "I wish I could meditate and widen my appreciation without attempting to inaugurate a changed social program. I'll never stand for the benevolent dishonesty of Socialism or for the Communism that is the political capital of today's tyrannous administrators. But, against my will, I'm forced to consider social conditions. I'm concerned with them when I don't want to be. I'm interested in these new ideas, but so far they've caused me nothing but suffering."

"I'm not sufficiently informed," I told him, "to make a social program or to criticize one, but perhaps if Christ's standards cause you suffering, it is to compel you to some sort of emancipation. I've heard of that kind of thing. You will toss off painful incompatibilities, like Saint Francis of Assisi or later Protestant saints. Your clothes are too small for you."

He laughed at me derisively. "Toss off," he cried, "that's easily said, in ignorance of the kind of thing I mean, such as company ownership—do you know what that is?"

"No, I don't."

"And a matter of litigation," his tone had become quite rude.

"You talk with some good man who knows about such things," I replied, "don't come to me. You know me to be quite without knowledge of them."

Our parting was perfectly unsatisfactory, his attitude jarred me and trying to get under the umbrella and shield myself from the sting of the storm brought me back to life's lesser struggles with a jerk. As his car started I caught a last glimpse of him huddled in his corner with his puzzled face turned toward me.

Nothing in connection with this beloved band of experimentalists occurred for some time after that, with one exception, but a recollection of their simplicity and sincerity, their minutes and initialed narratives—to which I've been given access at will—followed me as a strain of music follows one from a concert hall. The exception was that the long young man invited me to go to church with him. His father had slipped in an icy street and broken his leg and he had come to look after him. He sent me a note and I—being occupied—wrote "with pleasure" on it and was touched at his delight that I had said it would give me pleasure to go to his church. He showed that to his priest, with whom he had struck up—and maintains—great friendship. The service we attended was very sumptuous and

I could almost see, as if it were a physical flight, the soaring of his spirit and the thrilled acquiescence of his young mind at various moments. He was utterly absorbed in the process of worship. I saw his joy in it and was so glad I'd come. We lunched together and he went to look at his father before he took the train again for the scene of his studies.

The red-brown young man wrote me a note that was reproachful in tone, saying that he had heard I'd been to church with our long friend, and implied a certain treachery to the benign austerity of truth in my having done so. He said that he himself was no missionary, that he could "turn over the engine, perhaps," but that the machine went far into spaces he would not care to traverse. "After the start," he wrote, "I never seem to steer it or choose the route." I asked him to come talk with me, and when I saw him he seemed depressed.

"Everyone who has found a beginning through me," he said, "hasn't stayed with me. Our long friend talks church to me and Dan is inclining to the Oxford Group."

"How's the drinking?" I inquired.

"Apparently O. K.," he answered, listlessly.

I felt so sorry for him. I was anxious to hear him talk, and at last it came to me at one jump that he was almost jealous of the spiritual companionship other people found very easily. He had burned his

bridges behind him, socially speaking, he had lost all taste for the aimless association with trivial people that had been his habit in the past, and he knew very few of those whose sincerity and purpose could command his respect. I thought that he really needed a Group or a church, much more than his friends. He felt that the Oxford Group lacked dignity and reticence, that their confessions were competitive and that the most interesting sinner won most honor as narrator. He felt other things about his long friend's affiliation that were as dissatisfied. I listened to him for a very long time, seeking the wisdom to answer him, strength to guide him, and patience to hear him out without deflecting his lament by changing the subject.

"Suppose we agree," I said at last, "that we accept Christ's statement—or was it Saint Paul's—that God's work isn't always done with superlative tools."

He quoted a text or two for which I was grateful, as I was using an impression without chapter and verse.

"Let people gravitate toward the religious expression that attracts them. If you had more to do, you wouldn't be feeling like this. You've lost your long friend to the medical school primarily; you used to lead him and now you're lonely, and if Dan is helped to keep sober by his Oxford friends, don't say a word against them. What you need is work.



Look at the way you've organized the times we've had together and the records you've kept. You ought to work, your mind is too orderly not to be used."

"It would be wrong for me to work," he answered. "I don't need the money. Other fellows do."

I told him how right I thought he was about that and that I understood how hard it must be not to have a vital interest in art or science.

"That's really it," he said, "I'm not prepared for anything. I don't belong anywhere."

"Perhaps," I ventured, "you're one of those men who effect solidarity for other people. Perhaps you're a combining force in yourself, a catalyst—don't chemists talk about that? You certainly are the window through which your friends have seen God, and if they walk with him in their own gardens, it leaves you more time to cultivate yours. If you try to belittle their sympathies, you'll only lessen their friendship."

I looked away from us then to God's power in human life as the New Testament releases it, as many contemporary lives exemplify it, as these very friends of ours whose meeting together he so loved, examine and expand it. I felt his depression as we talked, especially of Dan. "Christ moves in our troubled world and functions, despite pessimists and the defeatist talk of clergymen, who think that

empty pews mean defeat for his ethic and the world's indifference. The churches will fill again when they stop to prepare themselves for the competition of extramural thinkers, and when they offer mankind the mind of Christ rather than the time-honored manners of some special congregation. Perhaps you'll help them toward it."

He shook his head quite stubbornly.

"As for Dan," I went on, "the man who possesses God is delivered from drink. I believe that quite as much as William James ever did and we can like him and welcome him, but if he's more sympathetic with his Groupers than he is with us, we must face the fact that they can do more for him. Your task is to find yourself an absorbing task. I think it ought to be a social one, you're magnetic and your mental habits are good. The only wrong thing about you is a sort of suppressed jealousy, as if you put your very soul into training a sprinter, and then broke your heart that he could run faster than you can. Don't break Dan's power by censuring his sympathies. Think of the lives he may affect if Christ shines through him, not through his mind plus yours. There is so often that double thickness of self and borrowed self for him to shine through. Don't impose your life on anyone else's or let your opinions of religious practices be stronger than your sense of what evokes them. Emerson's strength was in never doing that, no matter how fast his

eloquence carried him along. Unless we can have an awakened mind, time, and opportunity to face the Master of Minds, we haven't used our chance to help a human being very wisely."

"All right, go on, lecture me," he said, stretching himself uneasily in his chair, raising his eyebrows and faltering as he spoke. Of all the many disconcerting attitudes of youth toward the preceding generation, I think this particular one is the most difficult to bear. I couldn't say anything more for the life of me.

"You don't seem to realize," he complained, "that I've lost my ranch partner as a—well—as a spiritual companion. He never consulted me about his highly stylized spiritual expression or asked me if I liked this clergyman chap he thinks so much of."

"Do you like him?"

"He's not a bad chap. But wouldn't you think they would have discussed these matters with me since in a sense they began through me?"

"Not under clerical advice," I answered. "Any priest with a head on his shoulders wouldn't send a seeker to an eclectic person like you. You have to pay a price for your attitude."

"Your own is like it," he retorted.

"I belong a little bit to every church in the world," I said, "but I remain in the church into which I was born."

"But I wasn't born into any church."

"Then," I answered, "you are free to choose one. Where were you christened?"

He said an extraordinary thing—a commentary on what a church might not mean. It was—"My parents never had me christened because they could not make up their minds if they could throw a better party in Pau or Dinard."

"Don't be babyish," I said at last, utterly unable, I suppose, not to lecture him, "your gift seems to be to furnish fumlbers at the door with the strength to turn its knob. Your long friend has become a man with a purpose instead of a contemptuous son who spent much of his time thinking up rude things to say to more parents than it's convenient to possess. He is living a real life in God's name. Let's be appreciative and courteous. Henry Drummond said that courtesy is 'love in little things.' You probably never heard of him, but forty years ago people read his books and loved them. And do remember that many of the officially religious people we've come across have been really ill-mannered; I suppose they think it's beneath them to observe the conventions of ordinarily decent people."

"We haven't met very many," he observed, and then sat silent. After a long time he told me that his long friend's "faith" was fundamentally different from his and that really roused me.

"It is not," I exclaimed. "It's superficially different but essentially the same. In expression it differs. And in your present mood don't say 'faith' unless you have to, for faith means fight to you now as it did when the early schisms dawned in Christianity. Each one of us is actuated by the same impulse responding to the same power, and although we can't show it in the same way, if we have simplicity and humility, we may recognize it in each other to our exceeding joy. Go with Dan to his group."

#### IV

He left me; rather sullen and distinctly disheartened. He wouldn't see behind an act to its actuation and he felt it a hardship that he could not find someone who felt and hoped exactly as he did. Before I slept that night he called me to the telephone to say that he felt if all churches were made one, people might talk with authority about internationalism. I thought a good while before I answered him, the subject was beyond me. I suggested that he discuss it with a sociologist who had studied churches and their effect on social conditions, and he thought of someone he could appeal to and said good night.

For days he kept this questioning going: Is it right to do evil to accomplish good? meaning, of course, Is it right to steer Dan toward the Oxford

Group on the chance of his sobriety when I feel the Oxford Group to be a bad expression? I didn't know enough to advise him, and I lost interest in the controversy until he brought Dan to see me one afternoon to talk about thought patterns. My red-brown young man used his dream for the basis of many lyric designs in thinking but Dan didn't like the idea of a prolonged mental process. He wanted a slogan, something, he said, that was a "quick kick," intellectually speaking. I said I felt they should go elsewhere for advice, but they sat tight and expected me to invent or remember something to help them.

"Just how badly off are you?" I demanded of Dan. He said he never wanted to drink till before luncheon now, and that before dinner he was consumed with a real thirst and made up for the morning's abstinence.

"I never want to be cured in the late afternoon—only in the morning!" he told me.

"Do you think the Oxford Group could extend the time in which you desire to be sober?" I inquired.

"It's like this," he said, desperately, "I know a man who was a grand fellow but drank horribly, got away from all moorings, lost his very considerable charm, and was too much loss for his wife to carry. I went to spend the night at a friend's house and we got to talking about this man. I

said he seemed all straightened out again and as nice as ever, and then I heard why. Since then I've wanted to meet him and hear him talk."

"I think you should do that," I told them. "I think you two should get hold of that man and see how he could help you." Just then I remembered hearing of a man who stopped drinking because someone said to him, "Don't take the next drink," and that interdict was operative. He's a splendid person but never trusts himself to use a drop of alcohol. I told Dan to use "Don't take the next drink" for a slogan, and I tried to say it forcibly because I thought there might be some hypnotic content in a cure like that. They left, as French people say, "after mutual expressions of esteem." I wondered how many people had prayed and were praying for Dan, beside me!

There were now so many people to think of and to hold tight against the light that shines on us all! I used to say to myself, other Christ-conscious people have their saints' days but all my "fêtes" are sinners' days; people writing that they must be rid of a habit or opinion or evil memory, and many writing me to find some way in which they could feel forgiven. It is a curious fact that many of them believed in condemnation without realizing the actuality of God. Some I thought were just conceited and liked to show themselves off, but lest I be mistaken about such, I answered them too.

Two men in Detroit wrote to me to settle a bet, one bet I was a Roman Catholic, the other that I was not. They were proud of the amount of the wager and had read the book because it was on the list of the reading club to which their wives belonged.

But of all those who interested me I found the church lady and Dan most often in my mind for those weeks. There are, of course, others who have become my friends and who do as much for me as any ideas or efforts of mine could ever effect for them, and this book is written for them, about those whose lives interest us all but who had little thought at the start for the long and happy journeys on the road they have made and are making.

The red-brown young man came to me the morning after he had gone to an Oxford Group meeting with Dan. He said it was no better than he thought it would be but that it actually had Dan by the throat.

"Then it's meant for him," I said. "Can he meet the man he spoke of?"

"Yes, he'll be here in a month and Dan's all set to be in shape for him. Coming home last evening he said a very decent thing to me, he told me my interest and understanding had been the first real help he'd had. 'I feel you like me and I play up to your liking,' he said."

"One can't help liking either of you," I replied. "You're both what I want to be—simple. That's



what our long friend isn't as yet, that's why he hurts you so by not saying 'I caught the glory I first saw irradiating you.' "

"I am a little sore about that," he confessed.

"Don't be," I begged him. "He is one of those people who like the kind of thing he has gone in for, and if someone tries to practice medicine for the love of God, he's entitled to any ecclesiastical antic that appeals to him. There's a bit of the witch-burner in our long friend, as witness his attitude to his parents and now to us because we are neither of us suddenly and completely ecclesiastized as he is. But what difference does it make really? You may not like the song he sings—but don't forget he's singing. You may feel he is walking on the wrong side of the road, but you can't deny he's going forward. Don't be separated by a few words like chasuble and reredos and genuflection."

"I can't see why he—with his grand brain—should stand for all this—"

"It's a question of taste perhaps. But he still loves to talk with us; he will be able to do more for those about him who are ill, do more perhaps for all humanity than ever we shall—don't let's lose him."

We made a solemn pact not to, and we have not, but his particular mode of worship grows daily dearer to him; he is, at the suggestion of his teachers, going in for surgery, but I am sure his happiest

hours are spent in worship and aspiration with a clerical friend of his who wears amazing clothes but who, in other respects, seems an average human being. I think it hurt the red-brown young man not to collaborate with him in an effort to lift Dan above his habit, but he was wise and knew that Dan would recoil from some of his expressions and his sudden complete asceticism. Those were days of deep suffering for our red-brown young man. I saw it and tried to see him often; he was jealous of his friend's new clerical association and battled gallantly against it.

One day I was scurrying along on the sunny side of the street. The day was heavenly and I noticed a face at the open window of an automobile. I thought what a happy sensitive face it was, when it suddenly broke into a smile. The red-brown young man was laughing at me for not recognizing him. He walked with me and told me he had had a narrow escape.

"How?" I asked.

"Mother," he answered. "Come in here for luncheon and I'll tell you about it."

He chose a distant table in a popular lunching place where the hungry horde couldn't trample on us and presently began a tale that means as much to me as the enkindling and storied heroism of soldier or saint. At first people we knew spoke with us, but presently we were alone in the crowd and

he began his story as quietly and sanely as if waiters weren't flying to and fro and a distant orchestra playing song hits.

"I have nearly died of jealousy over my ranch partner and Dan," he said. "I felt as if their inner life belonged to me—or should—and then suddenly they dashed off and followed other sympathies and tried to make me follow them. I resented their attempt at leadership; it seemed a sort of usurpation to me. They make their thought patterns, they go to Christ's life for them just as much as ever they did, but they get inspiration where I can't—and therefore I felt they ought to stay at home with me. I was like a fellow who doesn't like music and so tries to dissuade people from going to concerts."

"Dog in the manger," I suggested.

He agreed. "Then I found mother was getting interested in their church ideas; Dan has a church now and an awfully nice man for a rector, but the Group is his real love, and I still think he's anybody's guess. His swear-off is only two months old, and he's gone into his uncle's bank. He wants honor in business."

He fell silent.

"Well?" I asked after a pause.

He continued: "I felt as if Christ's Spirit were near to mine night before last; it was one of those unexplained hours when vision is impending,

when Dan's guidance idea is a fact, and I sat by myself to think 'in the light' as I call it to myself—and the prophetic truth that my mother would go off to the Group or another interest if I didn't provide a church for her shone in my mind like an electric sign at midnight. My jealousy of Dan's new influences, of my ranch partner's suddenly filled, constructive life, broke on me like a wave. I saw that I longed to be the power behind them and that Christ should be and was that, that I was trying to impose my life on the lives of my friends instead of laying it down for him. Laying down my life for him took on a new phase of meaning and I wondered how I had dared make plans for better minds than mine. Yesterday afternoon we all met, and I found I could listen with sympathy, and we heard of a church that has some life in it, in a town about six miles from our place. Mother can go there and sometimes I'll go with her. You see, I don't want to be in the position of a man who finds no church good enough for him; it is that no church adequately expresses Christ."

"Neither do I, and my sympathy is with the church," I said. "I wonder if there isn't a return to the church's expression of Christianity. I know how you feel about it and how they do, and I think that your putting your jealousy aside will prevent your ever being in the very least degree commonplace. I feel you've done a very distin-

guished thing, I congratulate you on it, and I believe it was done in collaboration with the Master of minds."

We went out together and walked in silence, but a verse from the 11th chapter of Revelation sprang into my memory like his electric sign at midnight, and it has become a verse we often think of when something very good happens. It is the saying of the elders: "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."

Our elder friend once told us that "wast" seemed to him so silly that he couldn't see why we all took to that particular utterance! But he does now. His repugnance to "wast" led him at the dancer's suggestion to buy Moffatt's translation of the Bible to see if he hadn't substituted a modern form. He had not, but our friend began to read his introduction to the New Testament and became fascinated with it. It has been the beginning of a real intellectual activity; he will take anything quoted by Christ and track it to its earliest form. "I have often envied collectors," he told us, "fellows who fill cabinets with rat-tailed or fiddle-backed tea spoons—that kind of thing, but I collect what Christ remembered of other people's sayings, and I wouldn't exchange my card catalogue of quotations for any other man's hobby. The day he came

upon traces of Plato in Christ's thought raised him to exaltation. It made Christ actual.

He has met savants and archaeologists through his quest, and the ages have rolled back for him. When the University of Pennsylvania and Ur of the Chaldees came together that was a red-letter day for him.

"Why don't you retire and live at ease?" someone asked him.

He chuckled and said: "Because I need money for lots of things I had never heard of till lately. I'm making my archaeological debut sponsored by Abraham *Dum vivimus vivamus*."

We were all prostrated by his Latin and found that he was stealthily studying it with a young Unitarian clergyman every Wednesday evening and Thursday morning.

It's the era of the aged.

One morning very early—too early—my red-brown friend called me from the country. He said he had a lot on his mind about our group, and did I realize that the dancer was opening a big London production in a few weeks, and that he and his mother wanted us all for a week end before that. It was to be—he said—"The formal opening of the Third Story."

I didn't know what he meant and said, "I hope it's a detective story," and he replied, "Emphatically not." We chose a date, and when our tele-

phonic brevities were concluded, I realized that I didn't want a "group," for very valid reasons. I haven't the kind of mind that could lead a group, my social program is personal, my moral convictions are subject to change without notice, and I am impatient. I felt that such as I ought to leave groups to those equipped to guide them. But I went because I love them, and I saw the Third Story was in some way the result of new life in the red-brown young man. He had become sweeter and more spirited.

The dancer had to do all sorts of incredible things in the matter of transit to get to us on Sunday morning, but she arrived while we were still asleep and appeared at luncheon wide awake but weary. There had been discussion as to the advisability of inviting Dan but he was included at last and drove up with our eldest friend, who looked drawn and frail. We had grown to love him greatly; he said little and did much and it was impossible to tell what he'd jump to next. He possessed perfect inscrutability, what people call a poker face, and his loving, human self never emerged except in his radiant and infrequent smile. We never heard him laugh and his voice is flat and dry as a bone.

I had been afraid our week end might result in nothing but interesting talk, and I was concerned in the application of a technique, the repetition

of chosen ideas—the practice of a thought pattern. These people said that the practice of this technique had meant advance toward Christ. I wanted to know how and why, so our secretary had written them to put on paper some of their patterns and write an item or two of their progress. Our long friend excluded two nouns from our habitual terminology. One was “experience” as applied to our religious impulses and impressions and the other was “testimony” as applied to their record. He felt we shouldn’t speak freely if we had to consider “Is this really testimony under oath?” was that really “experience as physical actuality”? I felt they ought to decide questions of that kind for themselves, that is, what is implication and what is evidence per se. I also felt that if they used the word “faith” as often as they did, when they really didn’t mean faith in the apostolic sense at all, I would have to endure it or we should have to resort to the sign language. Having concluded work on the third committee on bylaws within two years I had no mind to spend time on words if meanings were clear, a dangerous practice—but we had very little time at our disposal, and definition takes time.

As I drove in at the gate of our red-brown friend’s house he stopped the car and we looked over a wall from a group of birches to a valley beneath a sheer, cliff-form declivity. A wide village



green stretched in the opposite direction with college buildings whose roofs held snow against a fading western sky. I noticed a sign against the barberry bushes by the iron gate. It read "The Third Story," and beneath it was the name of the red-brown young man's mother.

"You're a fast worker," I said. "You sold the orchard ranch, fetched your mother home, and moved in here in much less than a year."

"As I look back on it all," he said, "I was completely changed, in twenty-four hours, and the changed I, changed the life about me. It makes me believe in quick cures, rather."

His mother was waiting just within the door to welcome us. She looked very lovely in her extreme neatness, and evinced a quite new relaxation and ease. Time will not efface my first view of that interior.

The house must have been built in the 1870's. It had a front door of wood and glass approached by a footpath and another door on the side exactly like it where vehicles arrived. There was a hall running through the house and a side hall filled with heads and horns, trophies of some departed Nimrod. I was told that the stairway to the Third Story ran up from that. Even as they told me, two students entered with valises, exchanged a merry word or two with us, opened a door that was so a part of the wall one wouldn't have known without

instruction that it was a door, and vanished. Dan and our long friend came in from the squash court dripping with perspiration and bright with battle; our older friend was resting.

Every other week, I was told, our hosts spent three days in New York and very often they took a professor's wife along with them. They had reached a realization that money given to institutions was not ideal generosity and they were trying to give themselves; "at least as much of us as is worth giving," they said.

After dinner I read over thought patterns. Dan's surprised me greatly. Condensed it was the following:

Most of the men I know who drink too much laid the foundations of their habit at college. Colleges treat boys like men and make no arrangements for the intemperate. I am naturally intemperate, and I class total abstainers and alcoholics both as intemperate persons, but I call the abstainers benignly intemperate. Those men who possess God do not need alcohol. I have always—drunk or sober—realized God, but until I began to deepen my realization with spiritual exercises and patterns of possibility—meaning what I might be to others if I were not so sadly myself—I drifted, and regretted a habit I could not evade. I have been influenced by the story of Zacharias, who was dumb until the joy of John's birth was an accom-

plished fact. I will say nothing of myself until at least a year has gone by when I can look back upon a real period of sobriety. I am in complete sympathy with the Oxford Group but I have come to my sympathy with them and service for other men by the mind-training and mental groove suggested by my red-brown friend. I have hung four pictures on the walls of my mind and I—metaphorically—stand before them and study them. One is of Christ—on the cross, refusing wine because they had made it too bitter for him. The sorrow that drink brings to innocent people has made it too bitter for me as well. He said he could tell us the others better than he could write them, as they were very intimate and personal, concerning his private moral ambitions and desired spiritual scope. He was right, they are essentially his own.

Our older friend's pattern was of an island in a vast sea. Ships seldom came there and never stayed long, but the life of the islanders depended on what the ships brought. He refused to live on the island but he sometimes journeyed there with maintenance for those who did. The island was, of course, the state of realization of Christ's life in us and the promotion of his ethic. It was a cautious and limited picture but amusingly characteristic, I thought. He didn't like my laughing at his picture but I really couldn't help it. His determination not to be marooned on any terrain, so

to speak, that would compel his complete dedication, was so sincere and unaffected, so at odds with the usual attitude of those moved by the desire to grow in knowledge of Christ, that I was surprised into laughter. The habit of his old life was holding over into the new.

"What part do you take in this picture? Are you the ship?" I asked him.

"I am the person chartering the ship," he answered with gravity. "When I think of the need of those on the island, I am sometimes moved to charter a vessel for their relief. I cannot admit of any spiritual life without a social program."

I told him I wasn't at all sure that he had a thought pattern that was really a spiritual exercise, and he seemed rather hurt. He showed me a little cutting from a magazine saying that people must be mystical about common things and that he felt he was being mystical about boats and islands. He had an habitual puzzled look that made me feel that he struggled with a perpetual problem, so I asked him very gently how his picture got him along the road, how it cleared and accelerated his approach to God.

He looked at me in pained astonishment that I didn't see for myself how it could and did, without his explanation. I did see perfectly when, after fishing about for words, he said, stoutly, "It increases my sense of life's possibilities; I am begin-

ning to admit that Christ is one of life's possibilities."

He looked alarmed as if he had been betrayed into a damaging admission.

"I considered it only fair," he went on, "to read a few books that are considered inimical to religious sympathies."

I asked him which he had explored and he told me *The Martyrdom of Man* and a book by a Russian of which I'd never even heard. It was interesting to me to hear him discuss the *Martyrdom*. He said he felt that most young people lost their religious sympathies less from argument than from the fascinations of good literary style.

He said that a "book-page" man on one of the great newspapers had a nephew employed by his firm and that he had taken them both out to dine. The book reviewer had told him as a joke that all the "parlor atheists" who used to lecture profitably against churches were not the spawn of argument but the easy victims of literary vigor and charm. He had attempted to verify this claim with some success, especially in the matter of Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*. He got a philosopher from one of the universities to take up Reade's points and answer them, which he did amazingly well. He said the book was "dated" and I think that surprised and distressed our older friend, who had spent a great deal of time on it. I told him I

had read it when I was very young and was much impressed by it.

I also told him that I was amazed and admiring at the time he'd given to this work, and he said very naturally and simply that you had to be equipped to think productively about religion, just as you had to be informed to talk business or politics. "The preacher in my town," he told me, "is a good man, but he talks as if he and Paul of Tarsus were the only people who thought and spoke of religious matters. I'm showing him there's one other," he observed slyly.

## V

I regarded my day as over after we'd said good night, but the best was yet to come. As I lay reading, as I often do to take my mind away from the day's activities, I heard a gentle scratching at my door. I was terrified at the thought of a friendly cat. I realize that cats share our common gift of life and yet I can't wholly like them. The thought of a cat on the foot of my bed all night was disturbing. I got up, opened the door a little crack, prepared to dissuade a large feline with incandescent eyes from squeezing past me, when I looked into the face of our hostess.

"I'm so thankful you're not a cat," I said.

"So am I," she answered. "Do you want to go to sleep or shall we talk for a while?"

I said, "Talk," and she entered. Her neatness is very charming. Many women would like to look half as smart by day as she does in a dressing gown and bedroom slippers.

"Every now and then," she began, "I shall stop short in what I'm saying, because—I'll tell you tomorrow the cause, but don't question me, just let me say as much as I can."

I agreed.

"When my boy came to Paris I saw a great change in him. I said, 'A girl has caused it, some nice, possibly Western girl.' Like a fool, I tried to force his confidence and he shut up like a clam. Then I tried to irritate him into a revealing expostulation. No go. He shut up tighter and read a great deal. But when he did come out to me, he was so sweet and charming that a love and pride I never knew before rushed out to meet his advances. He insisted that I be up to date, and the things he said to me about death had sunrise in them, and I noticed how little he drank; like all young men he had overdone it a little on occasion, but not now. A glass of wine with me at dinner was all that he wanted. When twice he dined alone, I noticed there was no wine ordered. At first that seemed to me the greatest change—because I was material, the material evidence struck me as most important. It was on the steamer that he said the word that lit up life for me. We were in my

room just before dinner. I said to him, 'You are at twenty-eight what I'd like to be at fifty odd,' and he looked at me and said, 'Don't work without a pattern; as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.'

"I was interested and answered, 'Let me in on this—what pattern?'

"He lay back on my bed and watched me drink a cocktail. Then he said: 'You're not an individuality as yet. You're only a parcel of habits. Those that are physical are A-1, those that are mental don't give on the spirit, they give on the flesh.'

"'You're like an architect,' I answered, 'with your things that give on other things—doors on terraces and windows on gardens.'

"And he said quite casually: 'I wish philosophers and ministers would think of themselves as architects. You've hit on a swell analogy. See what Christ gives on, for he said, "I am the door."'

"I began to think involuntarily about what the pattern would be if I looked at the house of life through Christ as its door. That night I began: I said to *myself*—I had not learned to address the mind of Christ then—'I am frivolous, basically frivolous. I've never thought seriously in all my life about anything but my own comfort. Who is as frivolous in the Bible and yet came to be in accord with Christ?' I went into the library the next morning and began to read the New Testa-



ment, looking for someone who was basically frivolous who came into mental reach of God in Christ. I searched the Scriptures literally for a man or woman who was trivial, mundane, inconsecutive, light-weight, who had found the goal of human aspiration and was one with the master of minds."

I saw how deep her son's influence had gone with her; her search for something definite in her reading of the Bible, her speaking of Christ as the master of minds, recalled him.

"One afternoon," she continued, "I had gone to a friend's house where a woman had delivered a lecture in Spanish, a language I don't know. For four hours my life had been impersonal, I had striven with combinations of gestures and sounds, listened to strings of syllables without knowing where words began or ended. I was tired of trying to understand and lay on the sofa in my hotel bedroom saying, 'I'll rest here and dine when I'm hungry.' I fell asleep, and when I woke I had lost touch with life. I didn't know where I was, or care. Everything seemed definitely in abeyance. I remember despairing of any renewed force or definite purpose. I was afraid to recall my own circumstances for fear that I should hate them. It was then that it came to me that I was a consumer—of time, of food, of material for clothes, and that I gave out nothing but their cash equivalent, no

aspiration, no prayer, no hope, no fancy, no romance, no loyalty, no support of any just cause. I felt the misery of the obscure and unimportant and inconsiderable. What had I? An income no bigger than many others, a funny old house in a college town, a fading face and thinning hair, a third-rate intelligence, a familiarity with beautiful things but no knowledge of their originators or power to create them, and then I saw a truth arise in my room like a malign personality. It frightened me, it faced me as if it were armed and could strike me. I have never been so frightened in my life—it was my own insignificance. Its name was Meaningless Me, and I loathed it. I wanted to shriek. I had no impulse toward suicide, but I understood it as if light had been turned on a picture and as if what I saw were worse than featureless darkness.

“When my maid came in to me, I had but one tiny spark of returning joy and she brought it to me, for she told me my son had returned from the country and was asking for me. I had achieved him, at all events; I was his responsibility.

“‘He’s waiting to dine with you, madam,’ she said.

“I snatched the telephone and called his room, his answering voice cut me loose from despair.

“‘You seem so down,’ he said. ‘Aren’t you feeling well?’

“ ‘Never better,’ I told him, ‘but the afternoon was deadly dull.’

“ ‘You weren’t holding them?’ he inquired.

“ ‘I didn’t play cards; I went to a lecture—in Spanish.’

“He said that—for him—would be like going through a picture gallery in the dark.

“ ‘I suppose it has to be like that sometimes,’ he said to me in his strong, happy voice, and the way he said, ‘I suppose,’ nearly finished me. It was as if he knew nothing of a life like mine and, in the nature of things, could not. I reflected that this is a man’s world and that the accident of sex made him remote; I began to wonder what he was really like, and my whole life went to watching him, his expression, his comings and goings, the titles of the books he read, and to remembering what he had been like in Paris and on the boat, as well. I noticed with interest, not quite anxiety, that although he still drank nothing himself he spent hours with a young sot.”

I protested, because I knew she was speaking of Dan, but she was firm and repeated, “young sot,” with decision. “But I know now,” she added, eagerly, “just what he was about. It was grand of him. He did what many a clergyman couldn’t have done, he may even have helped the poor fellow, who hasn’t had a drink for weeks, to a permanent reform. They would sit round with me after

dinner and I listened to what they said and stole bits of it for my own. Some of it seemed very young and romantic, entirely too positive to be balanced and tolerant, but more of it I could use as a basis of—I think I'll call it education."

"I'm sure your boy must be breathless over your interest," I interrupted.

"He doesn't know anything about it yet—in detail, that is. I'm not ready to tell him because he has his own ideas about the beauty of reticence. He has laughed with the man I was speaking to you of, about Zacharias. They said that a sane angel counseled him not to talk before he had something to talk about, so I keep still and I do make it possible for him financially to put his ideas into acts, and I think I've determined that the frivolous can't be Christian. To be Christian presupposes enthusiasm: 'If with all your heart you truly seek him, surely you shall ever truly find him.' There is the proviso that connotes enthusiasm."

"You're right, I never thought of it before," I answered.

We talked till very late. She had found in this old house books by William James's father, and she felt that the churches ought to go through a period of neglect by the people that they might surmount the self-righteousness of which he justly complained. "Persecution," she said, "makes people so important—look what Hitler is doing for

the Jews—but inarticulate avoidance takes away the smug qualities of any human thing.”

I didn’t agree, but it sounded plausible.

She felt that James was a real philosopher with a contemporaneous message. She had never read any other philosophy.

She didn’t seem frivolous to me and I said so, but her crowning remark was made in answer to that: “I practice enthusiasm every morning from eleven to twelve. I read about Palm Sunday—its beginning, when the people went mad about God made visible, and I write a little on a Palm Sunday sermon as it might be preached in heaven, without a word of the tragically changed mood of the people later on.”

“Where did you get that idea?” I asked her.

“I went to church on Palm Sunday in Washington.”

“The Episcopal Cathedral?” I asked. “I was there too.”

“That was a great infidelity,” she said, sadly, “the sermon the clergyman preached. I wrote him a letter but then I tore it up. He scolded the crowd for recognizing Christ’s quality if they were to lose sight of it again, instead of rejoicing that they had even a glimpse of it for a moment. He should have asked us all to look a little longer than they did. He cheapened Christ’s triumph and belittled his success.”

She went away with a quiet good night, but I couldn't sleep on top of all that. I felt as one does who first understands that sound vibrates beyond human hearing. She was in the grip of the communicable Christ, the contagion of her son's realization had stirred her mind and was rebuilding her personality.

"Can one in this age, sympathize with Christ, long for his spirit and invite his presence, without formulating a social program in the interests of human need?"

That question was born to me in the darkness that night. It still dogs my mind in its every activity.

## VI

It was almost one o'clock on Sunday when I woke up. They had seen what I had tried to hide—that I was painfully tired—and had let me sleep. Our host and hostess were coming in from church. The dancer had come in after two A. M. and Dan had sat up for her and let her in. She was awake but still weary. She had flown the last sixty miles. "That's how much I care," she said.

The radio was going full tilt in the servants' part of the house, and in our living room freshly tended fires snapped on two hearths and very festive bowls of flowers stood about on tables. Splendid calceolarias stocked glass shelves across an oriel

window. In the face of all this ease and beauty we were marched off to a neighboring inn for luncheon. I understood why later, but at first I almost resented it. I also understood why our hostess had left gaps in her talk of the night before.

Our dancer looked like another woman in her country clothes and we realized how amazingly strong she was when she ran a race with Dan and beat him. She had a quiet, joyous serenity about her, and spoke very little—because of our evening at the long young man's where she had done most of the talking, her silence interested me. What she did say was pithy and delivered in the sententious fashion of those who know the responsibility of the spoken word. Our older friend still sat in the sun in the garden wrapped in rugs and a fur coat. He assured us the gravel beneath his chair was quite dry, and after a glass of milk he went on with his reading of Saint Augustine in full faith, he told us, of a hearty evening meal. He was like a child, docile and interested and visibly content.

"Supper will have to be early—at six," our hostess said, and then stopped short as if she had said what she hadn't meant to say, and I saw then that there was mystery all about me, happy mystery of the Christmas Eve variety. I also saw that I was its object and I began to imagine all sorts of delightful things, extravagant and impossible things. When I saw a string of motor cars leaving the gate

of the Third Story as we came back from luncheon I made myself as curious as possible, that they might have the fun of bluffing me. I asked if it wasn't a dangerous thing to let cars go out with the chauffeurs on holiday and the red-brown young man said they had no chauffeurs, that these men were hired for an occasion, that they drove themselves. He took off our wraps and stowed them away in a deep cupboard and then we followed him into his study, where our older friend was waiting for us. It was, I plainly saw, the moment of revelation.

The red-brown young man addressed us, standing.

"My mother's generosity," he said, "has made it possible for us to remodel the third story of this house. It is a higher level than we've lived on previously, in more ways than one. We have invited four students to live with us there, as brothers. They couldn't have come to college on other terms although they are essentially academic material. They breakfast and dine here, but lunch on the campus, they have their own living room upstairs, and bedrooms with baths. They will be here in a few moments. I want you to meet them, for they are our family and we should like you to be their friends. Mother and I debated together as to how to use our new and secret enthusiasm, where to direct the power that vibrates in us and that we



believe comes to us from God in Christ. We finally were sure that we were 'to make paths for his truth, in the garden of youth.' We had hoped to do it on a larger scale, before we realized the expense of necessary alterations to this place, then we found that financial caution is the price of permanence."

"Tell about the students before they come in," Dan prompted.

"When we saw how many fine boys needed the hospitality we had to offer in this old house," our host went on, "we believed we had struck a justifiable beneficence, and we chose possible guests with an eye to contrast. One is the grandson of a noted Boston Brahmin, possessing many good things but utterly depressed by the loss of fortune that befell his family in the failure of a Trust Company. His mother was suddenly and completely impoverished and all hope of a profession closed to him without college as a preliminary. Under other circumstances he would not have accepted our hospitality or come to a small college for his education. The second boy is a French Canadian trained by Jesuits in Montreal. He is a cousin of the Catholic priest here. He is very clever and very timid, extraordinarily athletic and rather distrustful of people outside the Province of Quebec. He wants to be a mining engineer. The third guest is Chinese; he is here to learn history and economics, to

go back to China and, if he can, become an administrator there. He is a born orator and my mother and I have begun to like him very much. He was suggested to us by the college Dean. Our fourth guest is a local boy who attained the highest school average in the state. His family was wiped out in an automobile disaster early last summer. They were inconspicuous tradesmen, and although this survivor is essentially academic there wasn't a chance of his getting to college if my mother hadn't heard about him, substantiated a mere rumor, and invited him to come here. He will be a teacher, undoubtedly. He is still very sad but we do what we can for him."

He opened the study door and the boys came in. They seemed very young as they were introduced. Our older friend seized on the Chinese lad with questions about getting up the Yangtze in airplanes, our hostess asked the Canadian to take a look at the fires and put a few logs on them. The dancer asked the New Englander if some Boston girl they both knew were really serious about dancing and Dan and the local lad stood out in the hall on either side of the main door, talking together and—I noticed—looking out of the long side windows. I could see that there was a plan in all this and I hated being left out of it. There was evidence of rehearsal. Presently the house door opened and the light was lessened at the study

windows by the passing of the motors I had believed gone on holiday with the extra chauffeurs. They were filled with people who descended and entered the house.

I shall never forget what followed because it completely changed life for me and built up in me a conviction that good things are not accomplished very often only because people don't try to accomplish them. Try—only try—do try, has become an undercurrent of all my hoping and praying, for from a little attempt of mine a great effort of hitherto purposeless and, as my red-brown friend once said, "accidentally respectable" people had flowered into a demonstrable beneficence.

Our hostess put her arm through mine and said: "This is your party. We got ideas from you that warmed us and showed us life's supreme possession." Her voice faltered and she pulled a piece of paper out of her sleeve and read this—I have that paper—I like to feel it is in my desk. I shall not say how I felt as she read it—I cannot.

"We have arbitrarily enlarged our family and have of necessity enlarged our house. Our four guests have very different backgrounds but a common aim—to be good and effective men. We have asked their ministers to come here this afternoon to bless our dwelling in God's name and because one of us is a French Canadian and devoted to his

church, his priest, who is also French Canadian, will begin the service."

We were given blessed and lighted candles and formed into a procession. I walked with our hostess just behind three Protestant ministers who walked behind the priest. We went up the stairway by the side entrance into a long living room with a fireplace at either end and four bedrooms opening off it. The priest paused at each room, then descended a few steps to a sewing room and the room of a stanch old American woman who was to care for the "third story." When the priest fell silent, one of the Protestant ministers faced us and said it was inspiring to him to have for friends people who desired God's blessing and believed that they could receive it by appeal. He said it augured well for the hospitality of the Third Story that a Roman Catholic and an Anglican priest and two Protestant ministers had joined in reverent demand and heartfelt desire for God's blessing on a unique and interesting household. He told the boys that it is not given to many lives to find kindness and the opportunity for intercourse quite so easily as they had done and he besought them, with real feeling, to be frank with one another and with those who were sharing with them an adventure in friendship from the basis of hospitality. When he spoke directly to the boys he said: "If you're in trouble, say so; if rewards or distinction come to

you, don't let these friends hear of it from strangers. Remember that it is lack of confidence that mars marriage and disrupts the financial world. I know—because I've been told—how highly the advice of the angel to Zacharias is held in this household. It is a modern attitude to let acts speak while all else is dumb, which is a natural reaction from the detailed and lyric spiritual egotism of sentimental Victorians. So now, when I urge you to be frank, remember that I am not exhorting you to be long-winded. I speak with knowledge about the value of frankness, of outspoken friendship, and simple, complete confidences, for I have lived all my life in college towns and have seen tragedies fester in secrecy that could have been cured by counsel, and I've heard of many scandals that might have been hushed in informed friendship. I love everything in the Third Story, its ultramodern guise, its wise economy of space, its restful coloring. It is the last cry, but in the voice of God, repeating that great invitation to life—that we think of whatsoever things are good, beautiful, of good report."

I knew we were in the house of the red-brown young man when the speakers initialed shorthand reports of their addresses and put them in a guest book in which we subsequently signed our full names.

One of the other clergymen said a final benediction, and after a silence we were asked to inspect

the rooms. The only thing I was able to observe was the bookcases that turned in on swivels and when not in use presented a blank wall. I was in a happy dream, and I am sure it seemed more wonderful to me than to the young men whose lives were to be enacted there. Later I noted the immovable beds placed in the centers of the rooms, their headboards the backs of desks, their footboards the mirrors of dressing tables. The clock was electric, cupboards and showers and baths were solid and practical, there was a sleeping porch with four cots and a small extra room in case of a contagious disorder. The young man from China said it had "the irresponsible benignity of a fairy tale."

It was not only very livable, it was lovely in ultramodern fashion. I think the dancer was the most excited of all of us. "Think of people *wanting* to do this," she kept saying as if to herself.

Our hostess, her son, and his long friend left us, and I knew why—they wanted the boys themselves to be hosts and show the Venetian blinds' ability to "stand without tying," as one boy said—they had the kind of Venetian blind that becomes fixed by pulling a cord to the right.

We all had supper together, with laughter and plenty, flowers and gay talk; the clergymen were charming to one another, which we understood was fortunate as there had been strife a little while back. Two of them went away early to their eve-

ning services, but the others stayed on and when even the boys had said good night and gone upstairs for their first night's sleep in the Third Story, we seven friends gathered ourselves into the study again to talk together.

Will you join me in a kind of census—There was Dan—who, drunk or sober, felt that God is.

There was the dancer, who happened on God in the mind of Saint Augustine. There was our older friend, who honestly thought—at first—that we were fakes and Christianity a racket, but who—God bless him—denies that, in the present phase of his development. There was the red-brown young man, who is a spiritual descendant of Saint John, and his beloved long friend who is—also spiritually speaking—an autocratic descendant of Saint Paul. And there was the financial background of the Third Story and the red-brown young man's mother. What was she? She could not call herself meaningless any more; she was the open hand and human brain functioning within the mind of new knowledge that is God's wisdom.

And there was myself, happy with a new kind of happiness, a satisfaction in other people's valor and experimental initiative. Someone asked me if I liked my surprise party, and that made me realize that it was the nicest party I'd ever known. There was no sentimentality about anyone except the dancer, her eyes would fill with tears now and then,

and when she asked a question about what provision was made for this or that, her voice had a quiver in it. Our hostess was proud of her son's accomplishment in getting all the clergymen together, and he was so weary that he had no definite impression of anything but relief that his experiment was begun. Our older friend was very silent, but at last he said, "Everything was real here today; we're all too tired to talk, but let's sit silent for five minutes and realize that when two or three are together in His name, he is in the midst of them."

That was his first expression of actual assent to Christ's presence in the human mind, and we all valued it.

After a long silence we went upstairs, while the three young men put out lights and turned keys in the house doors and saw to the locks on windows.

I thought of the four boys asleep upstairs and wished and prayed for friends for all those who face life and its uncertainties in its very early phase.

For days I regarded the Third Story as the happy ending of the story of our circle of seven. Sometimes we'd come together and talk and tell each other what we found on the Road we traveled. I was often thinking of my church lady, but I never saw her, and a rule of the road became written firmly for me in the book of experience; it is best expressed by Santayana in a youthful letter of his to William James from his father's house in



Avila—"Sympathy, after all, is the root and determination of thought and thus later of opinion."

The miracle of changed sympathies was what I had seen resulting in a social program that had its dangers but its exceeding great promise as well. It isn't the end of all that the red-brown young man has done, it is the beginning, but although the atmosphere of a college town where the intellectual life is rigorously closed to him often makes him impatient, although he has to watch his own and his mother's income diligently, that he may keep his four boys going, he is happier and of more worth to other men than he ever hoped to be.

Perhaps the intellectual life of the college is opening out to him a little bit, but the real rebuff that was dealt him was the attitude of the most interesting people in the faculty, which was that he was a spoiled young man of large fortune who was letting his mother finance a doubtful social experiment. The amount of money he spent was, of course, exaggerated and I honor him more than I can say when I watch his quiet entertainment of these people. Every now and then he meets someone who counts for something in the world of art or of letters, and he brings them to the college world for an informal talk or to be the guest of honor at a not too large party. All this is irksome to him although his mother likes it, but he accepts the discipline because he wants "his family" to be

people of privilege. His is a life of the spirit; the social and scholastic standing of the Third Story means everything to him, but he told me last evening that no day passes that he does not take some of its time for realization of the sources of love and of wisdom.

## VII

Interest in an educational experiment in a great mid-western city had taken me to within fifty miles of our older friend's home town, and an odd chance made me a delegate to an educational convention in the same place a month later. It was weary work listening to such earnest dispute about methods of imparting information and so little discussion of actual mind training, and I welcomed the lunches and dinners as the occasions upon which I really learned most. At one of them I found myself seated by a man of about the age of our older friend. I asked about him.

"I know him well," my new acquaintance answered. "He has been a successful, cautious business man. He is very retiring, and it's kind to let that account for his not being at all public-spirited. Years ago when we were enthusiastic about putting up the hospital here we tried to interest him too, but he wrote on his card, 'Put me down for the minimum.' Then his secretary sent us a small cheque. He is impersonal, cool. He is much away from home now."

I said that I thought a good many men who had lost their wives very early in life and had immersed themselves in business as a substituted interest for home life were emotionally undeveloped, and I heard with astonishment that this friend of his didn't know he had ever been married. One of the other people near us remembered it and from what town and family his wife had come. It isn't physical nearness that brings people together unfailingly.

When my visit was ending, I got up early, had my breakfast, and went for a drive through the Park system with a charming friendly couple who had been a pleasure to me. My bags were packed, my bills all paid, my good-bys all said and, on a golden October morning, I had an empty hour before me. The telephone in my bedroom rang.

"I am your older friend's nurse," a voice said. "He has been very ill, but his doctor has consented to a visit from you—not too long, of course, and no exciting topics."

I dislike having trained nurses tell me how to behave in sickrooms. I have rarely stuck red-hot steel needles through weak hearts or told dying persons where I felt their careers were open to censure.

"Give him my dear love," I said, "and tell him I am going home in thirty-five minutes."

"Wait," the voice said, and then my older friend spoke, a mere breath of vibration.

"Don't go back on me," he whispered, "if you possibly can come—do—I sent the car in for you last evening."

I went.

Everything had been thought out, the chauffeur exchanged my tickets for a train starting for home late in the day from a place I had never heard of before, and when we left the station yard with its stiff and inevitable groups of cannas, we took a flat road by a muddy river. The light of day was lovely, but little else. I took a long letter with me, to read en route. It began with this question, "What do you mean by 'rule of the road'?" I wrote on the back of the envelope that I meant its general conditions, not any specific commands. I thought again of Santayana's saying about sympathy, a thought which was fast becoming rule No. 1 for me. I thought also of forgiveness as the point of changed sympathies which precede cleansed thought. There were enclosures of which I was confidently asked to be careful! I read them after looking through the usual defeatist statement made by this writer clearly and at length, that is, that real religion is passing from the earth and that none today could write the letters written by holy women to the writer's grandmother between 1848 and 1869. I read four letters very carefully. One was about a man who must have been an unjust and intemperate person but who hurt himself very

badly in some way and when he was persuaded that he was very ill, agreed to see a clergyman. He did die, at great length, and repeatedly declared himself sorry for his mistaken life, being urged to do so by the clergyman, who read him portions of the Bible dealing with figurative presentiments of mental states. The comments on these readings and the dramatic elements in the whole approach of death were morbid, I felt, and even mawkish at times—an odd combination. The same idiom prevailed in the letters and I sometimes felt in their observations on death—there were plenty of them—that they had confused our Saviour with Charon, and Jordan—to which I found many allusions—with the Styx. I couldn't feel that these letters were anything but the froth of the era, like many written during the war, or like much of the politico-economic nonsense that is talked today. We are not a generation of letter writers. It was so hard for me to write politely in returning these documents, that I arranged to see the woman who had sent them, and we are now agreed that religion in life is just as interesting as religion in letters. These ideas absorbed me until we reached a strange little flat town and traversed a rickety bridge. The chauffeur told me it was my older friend's home town, but he didn't tell me its name nor did I ask it. I think it hadn't occurred to me that a man who was very ill would want a visitor—

I had gone to see him because we all loved him dearly and were interested in the depth and sincerity of his quest.

We ran between metal gateposts under splendid maples to a wide door shut tight against the strong glare. Every window had its awning, the verandahs were shaded, and the garden contained a fountain that splashed down into successive tiers of basins, the lowest of which floated lovely waterlilies and boasted a bronze heron. There were yards of bordering plants, coleus and lobelia and alyssum, and salvia grew in blood-red clots on the carefully tended lawns. The house had a mansard roof and I thought it must date from the late 'sixties. An enormous and very dressy Negro opened the door to me; he was depressed and I had at once the idea that our older friend was dying. Presently a nurse joined us, equally sorrowful, and before telling me how her patient was she told me her name, which she evidently felt to be very important.

I heard that our older friend had suffered from a very bad throat and then from something else, and then a third more serious disorder, that in spite of sedatives, he couldn't sleep, and that against advice he had read and written and twice whispered weakly for some time on the telephone.

"He ought not to see you," she went on, "he is so exhausted; but if you only stay for a short time and

avoid disturbing topics, the doctor thought it might not hurt him."

Except for two radios and the telephones I saw, the house must have been quite unchanged from the date of its building. A great deal of space was given to the stairs, which were of yellow wood, and the carpets were so thick that one's feet on the floors were absolutely silent. The furniture and the hangings were shrouded in buff covers. We were penetrating the past just by passing along the upper corridor.

My older friend lay very flat in a bed of black and yellow wood, his hair was neatly brushed and parted, and the telephone almost touched his cheek.

"Come back in a quarter of an hour," he said faintly to the nurse, and holding out a hand to me he spoke no word of greeting.

He looked tired out, his eye sockets had deepened and widened and his lips were pale.

"My friend," he began, "I am about done for, and I wanted to talk with you before I actually go—hence—you understand."

I understood only too well.

"It was last February," he continued, "that we saw the opening of the Third Story and that I took fire and determined to contribute some sort of good feature to human life myself. I wanted to with every impulse of every hour. I went into conference with a sociologist of Detroit and a min-

ister who was recommended to us. They suggested plans which pleased me, and I think they were good plans, very good plans," he said, wistfully. "But I've given them up."

I remembered how ill he was and bit off the disappointed "Why?" that had risen to my lips.

"I had an—experience—" he went on, "that was in the nature of a direct admonition. I had been discussing the possibility of divine guidance with a man I met on the train. He was a humble sort of person, much like myself, but he told me of a singular incident of his early life that interested me greatly. He felt he had been divinely guided. I said to him, 'All that seems to me like seeing a ghost; I'd like to but I can't believe I ever shall. I let the magic of religion strictly alone. I am concerned with its philosophy and commands. They fascinate me.' We parted, and that evening I sat working over the sociologist's plan in figures when there formed within my consciousness a refrain like the chorus of a ditty, 'You can't give in honor because you must give back.' It was a great shock to me and I put it from me, but in the morning it attacked me again and I said I won't temporize with this, it's psychic experience, it is guidance. I put the plan away in my desk and when I left my office that afternoon I began to reckon what I must give back."

He told me that he sat on the verandah of the



house we were in from eleven o'clock at night until sunrise and decided that his point of attack was a lawsuit that had been dragging its weary length through court after court. The suit had been devised to lessen the activity of a young firm which threatened to invade and capture a monopoly of our elder friend's company or one of its "districts." This young firm had fought more vigorously than had been anticipated and, although a good deal hurt, still kept on doing business.

"We don't think they can hold out much longer, but it's that I'm concerned about," our older friend whispered, wearily. "We're all wrong, our point of view is artificial, our attorneys have prestige, are resourceful, but I must get it dropped. I'm responsible, but my company may not consent. I have no energy, I'm sick, I can't back up my conviction." He began to toss about.

"And then," he hurried on, "there's Blankville—Blankville is my hell."

He told me that town was the site of a factory which put into marketable shape a mineral found near by. It was an isolated place, Company owned; no man could buy his house, or purchase supplies except at the Company's store, etc. Everything a dweller in Blankville bought he bought from the Company.

"That's wrong," our older friend said, "even the cocoa people in England who aided their workmen

by company ownership sixty years ago, see it's a wrong principle today. His truth goes marching on—that's the fact. I'm not keeping step with it. I'm off the road. I feel guilty as hell for giving a swimming pool to the hospital here a month ago. I've no right to give when I owe such debts—I'm dying in a bad fix."

He looked terribly ill and spent.

"It is bad," I answered, "but let's deal with the immediate and leave the ultimate with God until we're fit to deal with it. I dare say you're right about these things, but until you told me about them last winter I didn't know what company-owned towns were, I merely knew that there had been a strike in one—in North Carolina, I think. Now, you're not doing well physically because you're choosing your own destiny, you're taking your death for granted. I admit you're very ill, but if you calmed down, you might get some sleep and pull yourself together. I'm sure if you could get yourself to sleep all the sleepy-stuff the doctors have given you would—literally—do the rest."

"I can't sleep," he cried.

I put my hand on his and said: "It's my turn to talk a little now." I don't remember in the least what I said, but it began with the twenty-third psalm, not repeating it but saying that one wished for its private history, one wished to know how many weary and even wicked people it had calmed

and consoled, how much fever it had reduced and how much sleep it had induced. Within, I was praying in a mood of great pity, not definitely for any fixed gift, but just that our older friend might escape for a time from the burden of his mistakes. I thought of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Christian's bundle, and I thought of James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* and the lightness and happiness some of his conversion subjects had enjoyed. I kept on talking in a low voice, but distinctly, and after a long time his sleepy voice said at my side, "No one has held my hand in forty years—oh, yes, once—I'd taken gas and was coming to with a tooth out—the office nurse did."

I saw he was swinging off from the lawsuit and the company-owned town. I didn't answer directly but went on and on, and when I was really speechless with lack of further ideas, I heard a whistling breath, and released a limp hand. Our older friend was sleeping.

The nurse and a man who turned out to be the doctor came in and looked at him, smiled at me and left the room, and I sat on watching interminably. Sometimes he stirred or snored gently and once he half turned on his side. He looked, to my inexperience, as if any breath might be his last, and I wondered where his mind was and hoped and prayed that some impulsion of God's power might inform and inspire it. Hours crawled on. It was strange

to be sitting there, in a demoded, silent house—I reflected that I didn't even know the name of the town; it was merely his "home town," fifty miles from the world-famous city in which I had spent the last few days. The nurse returned and handed me a slip of paper which said in typewriting, "You must leave for your train in an hour and a lunch is ready for you in the dining room."

I wrote with her pencil that I would come in a minute. She went out again and I knelt by the bed. I wanted someone to pray for him. I prayed that he might wake up somewhere if not here, no longer perplexed and beset with his own past but a free man, gay in his redemption and serious in extending it to other men. He slept deeply now and it touched me to see his emaciation and the noble arch of his forehead above a face that was still worried and tense. He looked terribly ill.

The nurse and doctor said they were surprised he had gone off to sleep while I was with him because he had been very anxious to see me. I think they thought I would be hurt because he slept. They asked me to write a line for him when he woke up again.

"He'll be disappointed that he didn't say good-by," they explained.

I wrote that I was sure his sleep would refresh him and that what he had said was very interesting and absolutely new to me, and why, if this firm

they'd been fighting so long was strong enough for so protracted a resistance, wasn't it strong enough for them to combine with it? You could keep your attorneys employed a little longer, etc.—just any idea to pass on to him to show that I had listened and tried to think about it. I don't know anything about business.

There was waiting for me just what one would like to eat and the clock showed that I had been over five hours upstairs. The doctor was very discouraging about our old friend's outlook; he felt there was but little chance of so highly nervous and so old a man helping himself to recovery. When I said, "What was the matter with him anyway?" he repeated what the nurse had said, and I felt little hope of ever seeing our dear and interesting companion again. It had been a stifling experience and a great shock. I hadn't realized, even from his weak voice, that he had been so ill. Before the car had gone ten miles after I had left him I began to react from it all. I felt happy, almost lightheaded. I saw his anxious, pain-sharpened face relaxed in sleep. I hoped and prayed that some healing dream might be enfolding him, that he didn't dislike his nurse as much as I did, that the doctor was tactful, resourceful, friendly. And although my mind was with him I was grateful to be free of the tension of sitting absolutely still, of hearing his breath as it came and went, broken now with a sigh and again

with a snore. My feet had gone to sleep and I dared not move them, a cramp had come in my side but I dared not stir. I was thankful to find on the train people that I knew slightly who had been on a trip to Alaska, and who could carry my tired mind to other ideas and associations. I was much more tired than if I had climbed a mountain.

The next morning I was told that my church lady had been calling the house, and I hadn't been in it an hour before I received an enormous box of wonderful flowers from her with "Welcome home" written on her card. They were wonderful flowers and I loved them and hope flared up in me that she might become a little happier and less hard. After that she would leave flowers on Sunday evenings when she drove in from her country place, and one day when she asked me to lunch with her and I couldn't go, she seemed very angry about it. It is impossible to say why my mind clung so tenaciously to the hope of her happiness. I never passed her house without an involuntary prayer leaping up from my heart. But when I asked her to come to me, she would refuse quite rudely and then send more flowers.

I expected a telegram from the house of our dear older friend, but none came. The dancer, who was full of sorrow at my report, sent him frequent night-letters and got his visiting card back with "Thank you for everything" written on it in a very

shaky hand. We decided that he would probably be ill for a long time, and the day before the dancer left for London she made me promise to let her know if death came to him. The red-brown young man told me he had telephoned his house, he was so impatient for news of him, and was told that he was doing nicely and got into the garden almost every day.

One happy morning he who had been so ill sent up his card to me in my apartment. I said of course I'd see him. Breathless, I snatched the door from the maid's hand and waited for him to step out of the elevator. He was slim as a shad, but beaming.

"I suppose you thought I was dead," he observed, impersonally.

"I have feared from time to time that you might be."

"If you sit there, I'll sit opposite you," he went on, "and tell you a few things. First, that I'm glad you stayed over and came to me when I asked you to—my goodness, it's two months ago!"

I assented, and he went on with what he had to say. Only once or twice his voice shook with a little ripple of feeling, but his face was tender and happy, and he was gayer than I had ever seen him: for instance, he asked me if I wanted to take down his confession and have him initial it, which was a friendly thrust at our red-brown friend and quite a flight of fancy for him. He steadied down into a

collected story. He said he believed himself to be dying just as he had received a vision of how he should live. He had had a remarkable talk with his most important partner, a sacred and absolutely private talk in their office, which had shown him that he was not alone in good will toward men and that he was not the sole possessor of Christ's peace on earth. It was a business talk but a beatific talk too, he told me. They agreed to think out their problems, to try to approach gain on a clearer basis. Full of the strength of a confederate's sympathy he had driven home to his old house, and wakened the next morning with a consuming fever and a swollen, burning throat. When he tried to think, a wave of weakness wiped away his ideas. He knew he was very ill, and when the doctor brought nurses to him he wasn't surprised, and he never asked them what was the matter with him. He thought he saw before him the beneficent exit of the aged—pneumonia.

But to float away from life just then, when he saw a chance of helping to clear away his mistakes, his firm's mistaken policies, enraged him. "I could not think for disappointment. I even thought one morning that there might be something in the idea of divine retaliation, that I was being shown beautiful things that I couldn't accomplish for a punishment. But when you came, I knew I must have been pretty sick to have thought that. That was



the first idea I had when you stood by my bed looking down on me, but I'd suffered with that other idea for days. I couldn't get away from it. I grew very ill and I couldn't sleep; I got fighting foolish; the nurses shocked me with their persistent care. I thought they made me worse. It was a horrid time and I remember perfectly how I felt. I had no idea that I was entering on a good time, of action and accomplishment."

I was very interested to hear his impression of the queer hours I had spent in his house.

"I can only do one thing a day," he went on. "My partner—he's a grand man, really—sent an eminent doctor down to me, a medical Mussolini, and I agreed to his demands, only one thing a day for all my length of days—if any." He sat looking regretfully straight before him for a time.

He went on at last, "I don't know what arose in me to greet you. I was so much your friend that your coming revived me. I didn't realize that I was listening to the sense of what you said, the sound of it soothed me and—I can't determine if I was asleep or awake when this came to me—I saw a lamp with a flame, the kind of lamp the wise and foolish virgins carried in the picture, and I saw it burn faintly and then more bright, assailed by a stiff wind and then steady in calm. I took that for an emblem of my life, and lost a sense of my suffering self in watching it, and long after you had gone,

when I had read your note and eaten something and knew that my long sleep had helped me, the idea of the private life of the twenty-third psalm came back to me. You said, 'It has meant courage to millions of women in childbirth, to husbands who fear for them,' and then you went through a whole catalogue of relationships till you came to me, the lonely man; you said of me, 'who has touched the hem of His garment and in that has found life.' I went to sleep to get strength to touch life again. I saw the lamp and measured its flame as a man looks at the barometer. I can't understand how I ever came to be so fanciful, but I believe that those fancies were given to me because my power to deal with facts was in eclipse. I was in the path of light from the mind of minds. I was very weak for a time, and the sleep that came so hard, possessed me absolutely when it did arrive. I never felt anything sweeter than the warmth of the sunlight on my body the first day they moved me from my bed, and very soon I began to wonder if there was anything in your idea of ending our lawsuit in a consolidation. I knew that I should have to handle that very gingerly."

"You took that seriously!" I exclaimed.

He nodded.

We sat quiet again and then I said: "You achieved a thought substitution that is a prelude to sublimation, and I think I'll talk a little about that because

I think also that your experiences will prevent your misunderstanding what I have to say. You had been thinking of things that had been done and you were unable to think of things that might be done. Ideas beat about in your head as terrified, house-pent birds will beat about a room. Fears victimized you, you were ill and had far less than normal resistance to habitual adverse images. The private life of the twenty-third psalm was a conveyance, a means of locomotion in which you were carried to the waters of comfort. I don't know what kind of blessing the lamp was, but I know that whatever you possess of evil in the way of temperament and habit may be sublimated, changed into rewarding, ennobling regime, by the substitution, conscious, not casual—of new and chosen ideas—thought patterns."

"I am learning to pray," he said.

Still we sat on in silence until he said, "I suppose we shan't get together again ever, as we did in the dancer's dressing room."

"We shall meet in memories and hopes and prayers," I said.

He told me about the dancer. She had made a big hit overseas and had just adopted an orphan whose parents had been burned to death in a theater fire. The child was half East Indian and her English father's people did not want her. She had been worked to death in moving-picture studios, small parts and pay, long hours and loose compan-

ions. He pulled a letter out of his pocket and read it to me. "She skates wonderfully and is entering a contest," he said.

It was splendid to have seen him, and he often sends me a letter and tells me what and how he is doing. He took a very old preacher on a cruise last winter and is obliged to adhere rigidly to but one daily engagement. There is a provisional consolidation with his defendants in the ancient lawsuit and the suit itself is settled—out of court. I expect to see him again presently but I have not been able to remain in my town when he visited it lately. My friends have seen him and tell me that he has grown very genial, is forever studying, and is trying to help debtors, console the aged, and prepare the very young for honest, happy lives. He writes me sometimes about his efforts to lessen the grip of his Company on the town it owns, and of his progress toward realization of the presence of Christ in the world of today. "I had so much unused space in heart and mind," he wrote, "which is now furnished with honest effort and tenanted by the bright presence which cannot grow remote or unfriendly." I think his mind was always furnished with effort although of a less altruistic type than today's. He now has one trust which he feels honors him, the care and investment of a small fund for the dancer's adopted daughter.

In looking over our cards I find that the crown

of the days following was Dan's sobriety. He was a good deal astonished himself at its continuance and he was interested in his work—inconspicuous beginner's work, in a bank, and he saw members of his beloved group and studied the dualism of the human mind, in Christ's utterances and Paul's, in modern fiction, in the German writers of the Golden Era, and especially in Goethe. His ideas were very vivid and he felt he could use them, if they were a little more developed, in helping the inert and hopeless. He saw people whose attitude of mind was fear of growing worse—not hope of getting better. I think he had learned from sharing life with Group members that when Christ-consciousness shines on a man, he hopes to improve in it. I want to set down his full scheme of aid to others because it has been productive. He has said to me often, "I am not a clever man but yet this plan was given to me." It is presented by him in a concrete and flashing way:

"Every good radio hour has its signature. The Ford hour has a bit of Gretel's prayer from *Hänsel und Gretel*, and as a consequence, is hummed and whistled in every hick town in the Sticks." I am using Dan's own words. The signature of his thesis is the basis of duality, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit, all mental strife is aspiration versus appetite. Instead of taking the body first and watching the

spirit's effect—if any—upon it, he assumes an inverse process which he calls the prime assumption, taking the spirit first and watching the body's limitation or development of it. It is that technique, he thinks, that cured his alcoholism by releasing the part of his consciousness able to behold Christ. It is an attitude, he claims, that can be practiced as absolutely as an exercise in a gymnasium. The breadth of his reading is indisputable! From it he concludes that the saints of the Orient found defiance of earthly appetite an end in itself, but the Christian saints defied the flesh to delimit the spirit.

But "as a matter of fact," he declares, "defiance of appetite is no good at all to Christianity unless it releases aspiration." He feels we were told that in the parable of the house swept and garnished. He now claims that something must be promptly put in the empty place of a denied appetite. He feels that the slogan, "Don't take the next drink," was the visualization that replaced his denied desire; it was a definite program, "something for him to rest on in his empty, clean-swept house."

I must conclude Dan's method and history before we leave him. I see him often, he is my neighbor and I know how much he is actually doing to help alcoholics. They write to him of themselves and each other and at first, he tells me, none of them really want to be cured. He says little to me of his actual successes, but much of the basis of his effort

and he is convinced that the intemperate are forever intemperate, but that the intemperate who drink too much may be changed into the intemperate who drink not at all. He thinks they know that themselves and shun the completeness of abstinence. This, of course, is his opinion.

"The trouble with the psychiatrist," Dan told me last evening when he gave me written permission—as have my other friends—to write of him—"is that he masks with a rigid vocabulary and shrouds in what he hopes is reason, the process of stimulating human will—which is essentially of the spirit. I know about that because I was in love once on a time and wanted to qualify as a husband. I consulted a psychiatrist, and in spite of his reputation I think he's a washout. He tries to get you to make admissions and he runs a secular confessional without the absolution clause. He doesn't try to wake his patients up to the fact that they are spirits and that the will is a spiritual factor. They can't know that of themselves, for life is narrowed down for them to individual experience, which has been physical, rarely even casually, spiritual. He asks them to exert will power when they have no will. They have brains, those people, but no minds, as I understand mind as being the psychic part of the brain. They can catch a mistake in a column of figures, or trip up an erring acquaintance, as well as anybody, but their inner selves can respond to

the salute of the spiritual alone. Christ watched and measured the duality of man. We can't, I mean just the run of the mill, like me. Priests and ministers who are more than men who spin the prayer wheel or doctrinal megaphones, can rouse them, a few able doctors may, if they possess the human touch, and schoolteachers do—plenty of them. But we have to rely on a method, to explore and improve a practice, to suggest and augment thought patterns."

He took my hand to say good night and I held it that I might enjoy the close-up of a changed man. He had lost weight, the white of his eyes was very white, and in their expression I found evidence of a man who sees far, as far as the beauty of God.

## VIII

Ella Smith is the name I have chosen for a friend of ours because her own is so unusual that if I tried to find its equivalent, I might betray her identity. She wrote to me one day an inescapable, penetrating letter, enclosing other letters which said that she was a woman of standing, unusual gifts, and fine character. One of those recommendations was signed by a name known to every American. Ella's own letter was very clear. It said that she was coming from the house of an old friend where she had spent a week end and had picked up *I Follow the Road* to read on the train. She felt it had "opened



a chasm at her feet but shown her a break in the clouds above her." She enclosed the letters of recommendation lest I might think she was an idle and curious person writing to me for something to do. "I am in need of you or I would never do as I am doing," she wrote. "You have something concrete to offer. Can you believe that I am sure, after reading your book twice, that I am doing very wrong and that—at the same and for the first time—I feel I may find power to do right. I have come to the town of your publisher solely to see you, to find you. Wherever you are." Having felt exactly like that myself I was predisposed to help her if I could. I also believe I have a positive standard about these letters although I can't formulate it. It is more than instinct.

She gave me her telephone number at an excellent hotel, and as she said she would be staying there for a few days I called her the next morning. By ten o'clock we were facing each other in the strong sunlight of my living room.

She was a beautiful woman, but at this first meeting she looked unbalanced, crazed. She was tastefully and suitably dressed as far as garments went, and her sleek black hair had one dramatic streak of white over the left temple. Her slim hands were ornamented—each—with outlandish but very valuable rings. She wore a brooch at her throat that looked like a cross between a crab and a light-

ning flash, and it had something to do with her birth, month, and horoscope. It was encrusted with good stones and both her rings and this pin were beautifully clean and sparkling. The watch she wore on her wrist was enormously expensive, being a cabochon emerald on a slim chain of diamonds. I couldn't place a woman like that, there was none of the restive self-consciousness of many movie stars about her, nor was there the willingness to let life come up to her that very well-bred people have; she was terribly worried, terribly weary, her eyes were red and her face white and anxious. She scanned me very narrowly and I was quite sure she was making up her mind as to whether I could or could not be trusted. She was quiet at first, but as she looked at me she became terribly upset, her breath rushed from her and she would snatch it back. Finally tears flooded out on her cheeks and I knew she was desperately ashamed of them.

I said to her: "Sit here quietly until you get some idea of the place we're in and the kind of woman you've come to for friendship. Take time to determine whether or no you want to confide in me. You don't want to do or say anything you might regret."

"Pray for me," she burst out.

I told her I had done that. "I try to remember my prayers," I said. "Do you remember that Christ endorsed the short prayer of sincerity, 'God be

merciful to me a sinner'? I sometimes wonder if it is as irksome to the Divine Listener as to the human ear, to hear the same thing again and again. I make a practice of remembering my prayers and of seeing how I can improve them, how bring my ideas to greater suitability—if there is such a word—for the mind of Christ."

I talked in this way to give her time to recover, but I realized that if she knew the power of prayer—objective and subjective—she was not impossible to help.

After a while she spoke more quietly, saying, "What is responsible for most of the sin in this world?"

I couldn't answer offhand, and I looked back on other days with a kind of envy, days in which one could have said, "The devil," and let it go at that.

Finally I ventured rather tremblingly to say, "Fraud—take it in all its branches."

She cried out as if I had slapped her suddenly.

"You know about me," she wailed.

"Whatever I have said," I told her, "is just a shot in the dark, I know nothing of you, and you mustn't impute clairvoyance to me or any psychic power."

"Will you swear that what you say is coincidence and that you know nothing about me?" she demanded more normally than she had yet spoken.

I told her that I felt my word for it was quite

enough. She sped an appraising glance at me and agreed. I sat perfectly still, so did she. An appreciable interval passed in discomfort for both of us. Then she said in a voice that was very small and shamed, "I am sorry to behave so."

"You are unhappy," I answered.

She bit her lips and wrung her hands, and I wondered if the interview would ever end. It really began when she looked bravely into my face and spoke with decision, "I am a fraud," she announced. "I get rich on it."

"What is your line?" I asked, but I wasn't as calm as I sounded.

"Spiritualism," she replied, "and you're against it. I saw that in your book, but I had to come."

"I'm not against spiritualism, but I've not been attracted by it and am ignorant of it. Now," I went on, "if you've decided to tell me your story, make up your mind where it begins and if I can help you, I shall with all my heart."

She took that very literally, and finding a beginning for what she meant to tell steadied her a little.

"My mother," she said, "was Primavera Smith; you'll admit she was a great medium, authentic and famous?"

"I accept your assurance of that," I returned, feebly. As a matter of fact, I had never heard of her, which was partly a matter of habitat, as it were, for she was locally very prominent.

Her daughter told me she had died in '28, and then she began her story in these words:

"I had come home from a cruise I had gone on with some young friends, to find her gone, and the funeral almost immediately before me. Everything was confused and the house disturbed and yet so empty. There were at least a thousand letters to be opened and read and many more that she had laid aside, perhaps to be answered, or perhaps because they contained some word that pleased or informed her. Everyone wanted to get in touch with her spirit, but I was occupied with financial problems. When the doctors' and funeral expenses had been met—and they were very heavy—I was frightened by the small sum that was left. We had always spent money very freely, for her seances and private work had paid wonderfully well.

"One night in looking through her papers I found eight letters that were from very rich people who had paid her big sums, indicating great interest in her powers. Two of them had practically supported us, one letter from the ———'s (she mentioned a well-known family) started me off as a fraud. In that letter they wrote the death warrant of my honesty by saying, 'Four messages from Irma have been remarkably evidential and truly comforting. We want you to have her ring or her emerald watch—whichever you choose.' "

"Was it a recent letter?" I asked.

"Less than a year old, but I had seen neither watch nor ring in mother's possession. I sat down, in fear of poverty, and wrote to Irma's family. I told them I had been impelled to write automatically, and that after almost an hour of vague scratchings a message had come through that they might be able to interpret as the initials were those of a member of their family, let us say A. B. C. The message I sent was: 'Irma is so surprised that you can communicate with her. She knew she could flow over to you all but had not counted on your ability to answer. There are few two-way mediums. Ella is one as well—I thought Ella is one too, but I think one two like that would confuse you—also—also—I could have used also, use Ella, Irma says give her her watch it will concentrate her. Don't be afraid to ask the great question Primavera S.' I used the confused sentence 'Ella is one-two' because such authentic writing often runs like that.

"I had an eager telephonic reply, an urgent invitation to go at once to their summer place. I rushed there and discovered more than a means of support. I found a way to live in luxury. I held seances at a high figure for each person admitted; I said at first that I couldn't hold one because my mind was abstracted by the necessity for raising thirty-five hundred dollars and that I must go home to do that. The next morning I received a bank cheque for the amount. I took it at once to my

hostess and told her that I was afraid to accept it, lest at some future time it be said that I received it for wrongdoing or extorted it to hush a secret. That evening when they were gathered together, I put the cheque on the table and told them it was a temptation to accept it but that my fears prevented. A young widow told us that she had sent it, and kissed me as the most honest woman she had ever met. She then told us that I had used all the words her husband had written in his first love letter to her which she had lost. If that is true, it is the nearest to an authentic message that I have ever come."

"Will you tell me about your seances? If that was the case, how did you manage to keep them up?" I had to urge her to reply.

"To begin with," she said, "my hostess and one of her brothers were convinced that I was an authentic medium because I had spoken of the watch—this watch." She touched the splendid bauble on her wrist. "They from my first welcome to their house, begged for a sitting. I demurred, because I said I was physically tired. They were so good to me—those two."

I asked her to answer my question again. "How," I said, more insistently, "were you able to deceive people?"

"Because I had so often seen my mother demonstrate her power. I copied her, being careful to

avoid her vocal peculiarities and to develop my own."

She was silent again, and these pauses were really dreadful. I have never known why but I rate them as among the most terrible experiences life has brought to me. I prayed as a terrified bankrupt, a horrified shipwrecked person, might pray—a physical, catastrophic petition, the kind of prayer H. G. Wells evidently thinks is the only kind put forth by Christians. I looked at the clock; we had been a long time together.

"Do you get the extent of it?" she said at last. "I told them that after each ectoplasmic outgo I couldn't work at my job"—her voice rose into a sort of suppressed screech when she added—"I had no job but I told them I had to work to live and so I must discontinue sittings. Within a week I received seven cheques for one thousand dollars each and ever so many smaller ones. I took the two forwarded by the most prominent persons, those whose word had weight—and returned them saying that other generosity had made it possible for me to live simply for a year and that I did not, therefore, feel justified in accepting their gifts."

"Had you ever had an ectoplasmic outgo?" I inquired.

She laughed a bitter laugh. "I once found a white thread on my coatsleeve," she answered.

"Of ectoplasm?" I persisted.



"Of cotton," she replied.

"After the return of the cheques," she continued, "they had a meeting and decided that I would rather starve than accept charity. They organized 'The Group of Gropers' and offered me the equivalent of the salary they thought I received from the job I didn't have. I wrote them a grateful letter. I had heard of Henry James sending a letter to Bryn Mawr's woman's college when they asked him to lecture there. He had said, 'The emolument does not attract me.' I used that phrase and my people did to me what the college authorities did to him, they augmented the original offer. I accepted and became the official medium of the Group of Gropers, which speedily became fashionable and active. At first everything was very secret, after that no more than private.

"They would invite a few friends to spend the evening and I would seem to be on a footing with the other guests. I would go into trance state at someone's request and then demonstrate, or seem to demonstrate. I heard by accident—overheard—that one guest who was expected one Sunday evening had lost a dearly loved relative on the Lusitania. No one knew I had overheard, I had taken up an extension of the house telephone and I did not put it back till after the main receiver had been returned lest the click betray me. When Sunday came, I wondered which of our visitors was the

bereaved one. It was the most formal meeting we had ever had.

"I sat in front of a little table in a darkened, but not dark, room, and began with a lecture on spirit photography, explaining to them the many chances of fraud. Then I began to behave as if I were going into a trance, closing my eyes and breathing deeply. Then I would resume my talk until I said, 'Let me be quiet for a few moments.' I fell back in my chair with my head a good deal on one side and began calling very softly, 'Sophy, Sophy, Sophy.' From the telephone talk I knew the woman whose friend had been lost on the *Lusitania* was called Sophy. Presently a voice in the audience said, very timidly, 'Who wants me?'

"I couldn't answer that directly and it was very dangerous not to answer. If anyone in the room had called my bluff, I should have been lost; if anyone had insisted that I speak the name promptly, I think I should have been exposed, but I rushed on with a description of shipwreck—something like: 'The water was cold but I didn't feel anything for long; I was looking into people's eyes, and then someone looked into mine. It was Mary, that was how I knew I was dead, because she had been dead so long.'

" 'Dear old Mary, do you see her often?' I saw the woman in the audience who asked me that. I had chosen 'Mary' for a name because it is so usual,

everyone knows at least one Mary, and when that question came so quickly, I knew that there had been a Mary, probably a nurse because of the affectionate adjective 'old,' in their circle. 'I saw her often at first, but rarely now,' I answered, and the same voice cried out, 'Was she kind?' That question puzzled me dreadfully so I hedged. 'Much more so,' was my reply. Then I was asked if I had anything special to say. 'I want to guide you in the matter we were always discussing,' I cried, with an eye to future sittings.

" 'Oh, my dear, my dear, I wish you would, if you mean—Harold,' the voice pleaded.

"I caught another glimpse of its owner then and from her face I knew that what I said had impressed her greatly.

" 'Prepare questions,' I went on, 'write them, bring them, don't be haphazard. A two-way medium gets too tired, don't waste her power.'

"A cool sort of intelligence asked me a question or two then, a man sitting near me, who could easily have tripped me up. I took refuge in screeching, 'Prepare questions, write them, promise me.' I called that out again and again and turned and twisted about in my chair.

"I don't know why I did that, but it was very lucky, for an old gentleman who turned out to be a well-known psychologist, recommended that my face be wiped off with a wet cloth.

“ ‘You see for yourself,’ he explained, ‘that what has happened to the medium is like what happens to the phonograph record if the needle gets stuck. Her message is arrested for some reason just like that. The one phrase recurs, she can’t get past it.’

“ ‘Prepare questions, write them, promise,’ I went on saying. Everyone seemed impressed and said how interesting it was, and the phonograph analogy passed from mouth to mouth. I ended all my sittings that way, screeching and repeating one phrase and I always heard someone or other explaining to strangers that I was the phonograph record with a needle stuck on it.”

I think it was there that I said that if people wanted to be fooled they were easily satisfied.

## IX

She sat looking at me, “People love magic,” she said, “and there is some ‘Night’ lingering in the most enlightened minds. I played on it, I suggested gifts of jewelry that had belonged to those who had gone. I told people how sorry the dead were sometimes for the wills they had made, and I pretended to have messages for heirs about the disposition of property.”

A dark red came into her cheeks and she sat with trembling lips and hands, wholly unable to speak. When she was under control again, she said, very firmly: “The most fraudulent thing I did was to

describe the hereafter. I told what the blessed dead saw and felt, and what those incapable of spiritual aims saw and felt. The descriptions attracted clergymen and many people prominent in religious life. They gave me great prestige."

"When did you give these meetings up?" I inquired.

"I haven't done so as yet," she answered. "I want to, I must, but I don't know how. It is a most horrible mess. I am supposed to have one here next Sunday evening. I have accepted cheques amounting to over six hundred dollars from the people who are coming."

"How many people?"

"About thirty."

"Why do you want to stop these meetings if they pay you well?" I asked that of her because I wanted to see what she would reply.

"In the first place," she declared, "they're frauds. I have no psychic power."

"Why are you so suddenly sensitive about their being fraudulent? You've always known that they were," I exclaimed.

"It's my new knowledge," she said, stubbornly. "I'm wrong. I'm a cheat, the kingdom of heaven is a little bit within me, I can't keep it there and keep on cheating too."

One of our fearful silences descended on us again, and then she began on a perfectly new tack.

"You," she said, "were picked up by the divine ray at night, but the sacred shaft—that's my private name for it—reached me in broad daylight. I read your book and saw its possibilities for my own purpose, of staying where it was light, of reading life by Christ's light. When he said, 'I am the light of the world,' he said the greatest of all his truths. His light showed me 'Cheat' written all over me. I saw that a pattern of thought might raise me to a level where I might hear and see more of his truth, but I saw at the same time that patterns of thought persisted in might increase my credibility with my audiences. I have been so tossed from side to side!"

I told her I didn't understand how they could do that.

"For instance," she explained, rather unwillingly, "I knew that if I practiced sympathy for a widow's loss and pushed my mind up against all her tragic readjustments, I could invent better messages from the husband from whom she was parted. Just to gain in credibility, although I hadn't been afraid of exposure for a long time, I began to make thought patterns, the parent thinking for his child, the woman for her mother——"

"Novelists do that," I exclaimed. "You have imagination and use it for fraud."

"I do—I did," she responded, confusedly, "but they were all so kind—and so credulous. One evening a clergyman asked me if the Bible clung to

memory after death, if it were treasured at the goal as it is here on earth. I had been in alleged trance for some time so I began to shriek and cry, 'Ida wants to answer that, she willed someone to ask that question—Ida—the question is asked—Ida, the question is asked—Ida, the question——'

"They rubbed my face with a wet towel, and I went through the business of returning to the earthly level.

"The next day I set to work to memorize passages from the Bible and I had to do it in a way that couldn't be traced. I was having some clothes made at the dressmaker of my hostess—she was paying for them—and on the way there was a shop belonging to a Bible Society. I looked in at the window and saw Bibles in many languages and one in the center of them in bold print and English. It was open at the story of the Pharisee and the Samaritan and the wounded wayfarer. I walked past that window many times and at the end of day I knew almost a page by heart. The next seance was amazing, the clergyman said he was pretty sure he knew who Ida was before we began, and when I recited what I had learned from the Bible in the window, he was sure of it. He believes in me as a bridge between two states of being. It is terrible. At first it seemed to me funny, but I saw the truth then of what you said when I came in."

"What did I say?"

"That fraud in all its branches is the soil of sin. It is, oh, it is!" she burst out. "I have read a lot in the Bible and I have seen that Christ punished people for nothing but fraud; he withered the tree that promised fruit and yielded nothing but foliage, he whipped the money-changers for cheating the poor and for selling what wasn't theirs—an approach to God. I do that, I sell what I haven't got, inter-course with the souls of the righteous and an approach to God."

"Have you enough strength to stop it," I demanded, "enough courage to tell the truth and stop fooling them?"

"I wouldn't like to be sued for getting money under false pretenses, and I should like still less to bring discredit on real mediums," she answered after a long wait.

"You think there are real mediums?"

"Yes, I know there are."

"Then that is something to think about," I agreed. "But if through the power of Christ you have seen what is wrong in your life, through his power and in the light of his mind you will be able to leave it behind you. 'Go and sin no more' may or may not imply penance and reparation, but as a command it is simple to understand and fearfully difficult to obey. If you do obey it, I shall never be able to express my pride in you, my gladness that I know and have talked with you. But live in



the light while it shines on you, travel on the road before darkness overtakes you. Waste not your shining hour."

"That too is something to think about," she echoed. "I want a plan, I want to know what I'm to do."

I think the ten minutes following was the worst silence we had. It was broken every now and then by her saying, "Help me, help me," and I feel it was a primal instinct of prayer, not addressed to me but to a power far beyond us. I slipped from the room to break the morning's engagements for I wanted to stand by until some plan came to her. I knew it would, she was too tossed about with the effort of meeting a stranger, with the misgivings we all have if we tell more of ourselves than we meant to tell, to think clearly about what to do for herself next. I struggled for her in my own mind, I held her problem against my realization of Christ and his knowledge of human grief and his presence in the depth of repentance, and then I went again to the telephone and called up the patron she had named in a far-off town. I felt I must verify her representation of herself. I was so deeply interested in her and in her story, so moved by sudden pity, that I was very anxious to believe it and that is a dangerous state of mind.

It was a long business and I was afraid she would find out what I was about, but doors tightly closed

shielded me and presently I had the very person of whom she had spoken.

"Can you tell me about the medium, Ella Smith?" I began. "I am interested in her and would like your opinion of her and her work."

"She is very remarkable," a cultivated voice replied. "You may place absolute confidence in her; she has become one of our dear friends."

The Lusitania incident was retailed to me, with additions, and I was also told that although her knowledge of the Bible was the conventional minimum, she could in trance state, recite pages of it in letter perfect profusion. Ella Smith was what she claimed to be, a successful fraud. I stood by the telephone while synonyms for what she was ran by my inner sight, "fake, phony," etc. A whole lexicon of nouns denoting cheats and cheating opened to me. I never knew there were so many names for one thing.

I kept her close to me until eleven at night. She was too shaken for diversion; no play, or picture could have meant anything to her. I drove her to her hotel and went to her room with her. It was ready for the night, and I said my final say as she took off her hat and coat.

"You can't think now," I told her, "but you can sleep. Realize that Christ radiates into every mind, perhaps more in sleep than we are aware. Don't fight, don't fret, say in realization, 'Into your hands

I commend my spirit,' and come out of your pain and perplexity for the night. Die, and tomorrow be born again."

She did not speak again but undressed, and when she stood by her bed she stretched up her arms and said, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

She lay down in bed, I tucked in her covers the way I had loved to have my Nanna tuck me in, I kissed her forehead very lightly, opened the window, turned out the light and closed the room door after me. I left no supplementary admonition for that would have expressed doubt of her doing what she was told to do. To arrest rest is what the psychiatrists avoid.

On the way home and until nearly two o'clock I thought about Ella Smith. I wrote up her card for my catalogue and wondered, calling on God's help for her the while, if her sense of beauty and the immanence of Christ were strong enough to pull her away from such lucrative wrongdoing. Her insolence and trickery, as well as the gullibility of her clients, made me laugh and made me cry. I realized that her appearance was of tremendous help to her, for if ever a woman looked the part of a supernaturalist, she did. I wondered about her strange brooch, it was as insincere as a stage property off the stage. I forgot other people in my absorption in her and let the day's accumulation of letters go unopened. I wanted her so terribly to

be free of it all—the insecurity of fraud must be awful, and the sense of it to a conscience in the process of Christian education must be intolerable. I couldn't sleep, although I hoped and prayed that she was sleeping, and when I woke late the next morning I was told that she had already telephoned me. Two minutes later I heard that she was in the entrance corridor and wanted to see me. I was frightened about her. We had parted so lately that I felt she had determined on some evil thing and had come in defiance.

The poison of fatigue was responsible for that pessimism, I think. I was tired, not physically, but emotionally. When she entered, I saw that she was poised, rested, and renewed in purpose. I felt happy again and pointed to a chair without speaking.

"I came right off to tell you about it," she said.

I managed to say, "Go on," or "Begin," or some word of encouragement. I was intensely interested in her. I knew that she had done some vital thing, and although I wanted to know what it was I wanted also to look at her longer. Her way of telling a story is to begin way back of the salient fact and I knew I should have to wait for it, or forego it. We laugh today over that characteristic which she tells me is the result of spinning out her material in the past to keep her "sitters" interested. I find it a maddening process and she realizes my impatience.

She began by telling me of the two days—or perhaps it was a longer time—before her appeal to me. It was a tale of tears and prayers, of visits to churches, she bolted into them like a hare to its hidey-hole. She searched her heart and fluttered the Bible's pages, she played some gambling game to see if success in it would give her a feeling of other, greater success. She became conscious of prostrating physical hunger and realized that in her self-absorption she had forgotten food. At last she came to the hour when I left her and her attempt to sleep. She asked me if "My peace I give unto you" was really in the New Testament or if she had made it up, "because," she said, "I have been so glad of it. Last night after you left I lay down in that just as much as in my bed and presently I slept. When I woke, my problem was solved, for the idea of introducing another authentic medium dawned in my mind. I have envied a young Belgian here in New York for a long time. He is employed somewhere and makes a good living, but he possesses extraordinary mediumistic gifts. I am going to lunch with him and I believe he will take over Sunday evening and have a real seance. I shall make a speech and confess myself bereft of power. I shall not mention the past, I cannot."

The young Belgian consented, and she implored me to come to the seance. It was frightfully inconvenient, but I did, sitting in a half-lighted room

while bells rang and chairs moved and people received word from their dead friends. I think one message was aimed at me but I didn't realize it at the time. What interested me was the interest of those around me and the splendid speech Ella Smith made in introducing the young pale man who caused the unusual behavior of furniture. I felt that "supernatural" is an artificial word. If these occurrences are not fraudulent, or, for that matter if they are, they are natural. We haven't found the germ of smallpox or the reason for such strange antics on the part of tables, but because we don't know them we can't put them beyond what is nature's self. I wasn't frightened, I didn't think the medium a cheat, but I did rather wonder at his audience. The messages they received so satisfied them. They were not all trivial messages, as some people have told me they always are. Some were vital indeed, but those to whom a spirit said "Jerry says oh-la-la-" were just as content with that utterance as those who received a definite and encouraging word. I found a homily from a North American Indian definitely boring. I was very glad when it was all over and I could get Ella away to her room.

"Well," she said, when we were alone, "how did it strike you?"

"I wasn't at all antagonistic," I answered, "but I wasn't always interested. On the whole, I think I shouldn't care to attend another seance."

She came to where I stood and looked in my eyes, steadily, sanely. Then she said, "I am done with them forever, so help me God."

I wish I might say that a way to gainful employment was immediately opened to her. As a matter of fact, it was not. Her patrons switched their interest to the Belgian and she looked everywhere for any kind of work at any kind of wage.

She became dreadfully worried and I feared she didn't have enough to eat always. It was an extraordinary fact that although she spoke and moved far better than most women, she really knew nothing of what most of us learn before we are fifteen years old. She would come and read my books in the afternoon, having passed the morning being rebuffed by possible employers, and often she would ask me the meaning of words in common use. But one afternoon another friend of mine came in and took an immediate fancy to her. Through her in a month or two—no, five months!—we heard of a hostess' position in a very luxurious sanatorium, and after many hopes and fears she was taken in on trial. After three months she qualified, and she and my friend as well live remarkable lives, trying to stimulate enervated women, to balance silly ones, to reform the wayward. My dear Jane says it is a disheartening activity because the patients are usually nothing more than "bone lazy," too indolent to sin actively. Jane has helped these women through

advising Ella how to deal with them, sending her books and putting her in touch with excellent neurologists. She has what she calls a "course in reality" on Wednesdays and Sundays and teaches these rich, dull, lazy creatures to look for Christ in their surfeited and material lives. My friend who found her this position, tells me that two women have been transformed and are eager and active in helping such as they were once, but that the others have not ears to hear. She lives too far away for me to see her often, but our mutual friend has spent every October these past two years within a few miles of her, and I venture to say that Ella Smith has transformed three women rather than two, or, if her individual, initial venture of experimenting with Christ's power be counted, she herself must be reckoned with as an item of constructive experience and the count is four. I like and trust her.



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### III

## A RECORD OF THE INCOMPLETE

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## A RECORD OF THE INCOMPLETE

### I

**I**T wouldn't be an honest thing to tell of good lives born of the realization of Christ without noting those stillborn or those deformed from birth. My brain—like most brains since the depression—works in the debit-and-credit fashion, and I think I am a little responsible for these stillbirths and deformities. I can blame three things—my stupidity, my inexperience, and a sort of perverse delicacy that prevented my calling a spade a spade if it had been used in an unweeded garden or one badly planned.

My first failure was my church lady. I should have gone after her at once, insisted upon seeing her, read to her, followed her, met her husband and her friends at once, given myself to her. But I was afraid of being bored and of seeming too much of a partisan. By waiting I really stood between her and Christ, and although she has taken up the work of forgiveness in part—I dined this week at her house with one of her husband's first wife's relatives!—I can't think that as much of a triumph as it ought to be. Every now and then she comes to see me and laughs with me—at me, really—for my "lyric" view of Christianity. She

talks to me about stocks and bonds and says she wishes she could afford to help educational enterprises, and then takes me to a horribly expensive meal in a restaurant with a large feminine rabble, and to a show afterward where the seats are very expensive. We always leave her friends at their homes, driving about in her luxurious car, until I alone am left with her.

"Have you infused any more poetry into the Testament?" she always inquires. It makes me feel much more of a failure than she could ever be, and when she comes to see me, she brings me some expensive present that saddens me. I refused the last one and felt that our pseudo-friendship was done. But she has never alluded to it; just sent me a first edition of a book I love with "I hope *this* will please you" written on her card, as if I were a captious child. One other thing she does to tease me, and as yet I haven't winced visibly, but it takes a great deal to keep me sane and steady. She will say: "Dear Anne, you mustn't say so-and-so again. I repeated your dictum to So-and-So" (naming a great person much admired) "and he leisurely slew it with one hand. You're a dear idealistic creature—we love you."

I feel that "idealistic" is a mere synonym for "idiotic."

If ever she comes up to any subject squarely, I shall meet her squarely, but I feel I can only deal

with her in honesty and from an unqualified Christian basis. If she will only let me amuse her, I will not seek her. When we meet by chance or at her instance, I am willing to be friendly and unmeaning, but I cannot give her material for experimentation and watch her waste it. She has improved, but she is not what she might be, and she is surrounded by a dark posse of clergymen who flatter her. She gives them lots of money and only is polite to her own particular brand. There's something the matter with all clergymen of other folds. "Narrow" is a word she uses against them, and she also refers to "the dictatorial Protestant quality" and the "elusive Roman practice." I've laughed at her about those phrases, and she has used them more and very defiantly. So I let all that go by without comment now, and I hold her in my heart as my dear disaster, and ask in my prayers that I may recognize everything in her that is of Christ, forgetting every other thing she shows me. As yet, and by fixing my mind on the lesser cruelties of ridicule that saints and savants have endured, I have not unstopped the vials of my wrath and poured out their invective. I have wondered sometimes if it would help the situation if I did, but I think it wouldn't. I think her very pertinent inquiry would be, "Where is now your God?"

One thing she has taught me, which is that one does not develop Christ in those one loves by tak-

ing their faults to him in prayer. One should take to him the glimpses of him one catches in the shady vistas of their thinking or in the bright moments of their ethical acts. I will bring him no bad news, for the news of his kingdom in men's minds is always good. A man shooting grouse doesn't look for crows as his quarry. I want to help her not to heed flattery, not to exclude women who once excluded her, not to talk so much about money, not to discuss the manner in which very sacred church services are presented just as if they were Broadway shows. That seems to me very bad taste. I often wish she'd let me alone; life is more comfortable without her; but she won't, she tells me, and I suppose I must endure her to the end. She has given me permission to write of her as I please, and she means it I think, for only a fortnight ago she was in a mood like that in which she first sought me, and she promised me faithfully not to act against the son of one of her old persecutors who has just entered her husband's business. She had planned a masterly campaign against him and came to "put it before me," her excuse being that members of the lad's family cannot be trusted. I hear from my own boy that he is an able and trustworthy citizen. She dashed off to a churchwoman's something or other after that and besought me to go with her. When I flatly refused, she said: "My pet, you are fundamentally pagan. I don't know why

I waste my time on you, and you have no sense of justice." Three days later she was in tears and deep unhappiness as when first we met.

"Why do I do these things?" she cried.

I told her why I thought she did them, and she swore to abandon her retaliatory campaign against this boy, but later she entered into a vitriolic exchange of discourtesy over some church matter with someone who has always seemed to me feeble-minded. She hides all this wild behavior from her husband, who is very busy and who would love and cherish any woman who was his wife. They are in accord, but not very close contact. His work absorbs him and he has no idea of the kind of mischief she is up to most of the time. For instance, three years ago she prevented the permanence of a really efficient measure for the treatment of children specially afflicted, because the prime mover in it backed a church which she felt interfered with matters in her own parish. When she told me about it, I merely said, "Aren't you ashamed you did that?" She sat staring at me and then answered, "I am bitterly ashamed." She left me without another word and a long interval passed without my seeing or hearing from her. Her quick mind catches the light now and then; do I blow it out or does she? Why can't she be at peace, why don't the clergymen help her? Perhaps they do. I know I have made some initial blunder, somehow I've

"torn it," as the young people say, but I hope and pray and when she suffers—and she does suffer cruelly—I try to help her, and when she is on the crest of the wave, expressing her ecclesiastical views and a most amusing snobbishness at one and the same time, I try to help her too. I could side-step any more discussion with her, but either my conscience or my undying hope won't let me. But that is failure to reach the haven where one would be.

If my church lady was my dear disaster, the next failure was my dread dilemma, representing high hopes and complete bewilderment. A lifelong friend of mine, a schoolmate, dined at the same house with me one lovely spring evening, and when we stood outside the housedoor after leavetaking, we were bathed in moonlight. "Get into my motor and we'll go round the park," she said.

I shall never know how we came to talk about Christ, but we did, and she said at parting, "You are the last woman on earth I should ever think of as being so intense about Christ, but I can see why. When he is stripped of isms and stands forth clad in his own words and deeds, he is so lovely that I tremble. He has always been like a needle in a haystack to me, and the ism makers have made the hay, each one in his own little field."

She wrote to me later saying how much it meant to her to hear about the possibilities of "a strange and uplifting companionship" with Christ in a



voice she has always known. I think I will quote from her letter, it touched me inexpressibly. "Perhaps I expected an announcement of beauty in your voice," she wrote, "because my absorption in poetry began when you read 'Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room' in class ages ago, and now the King in his beauty with your voice as herald dawned on me in darkness, and I think I am a changed being."

She was and is. She has an unlimited awareness of Christ; she takes him in her reverent heart into all sorts of ventures. Her invalidism has gone from her; she used to be very inhospitable, but there is a wonderful spirit in her open house now. She is behind many good things and she studies Christian expression and prays for her town and time. Her preference is for Quakers as a body with which to worship, and she gives money to educational effort, especially in the field of philosophy and metaphysics. She is a converted soul, and she put herself in the way of her own conversion. She has had one or two awful struggles and has borne criticism and expostulation from her paid companion unmurmuringly. It never entered her head to dismiss her, but she has paid the spoiled lazy creature off now and sent her home to England. She asked me to talk to a philosophy class in a girl's college four times in the winter season. She said her object was "Awareness unawares"—that is the title

she gives her own changed mind and awareness of Christ's power.

So I set to work with a will and wrote four—let's call them lectures—about philosophies emergent from Christ's mind and those emergent from human reason whose intellectual development brought them to a Christian and simple conclusion like—"Little children, love one another" or "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." I loved doing it; we had more and more listeners each time and a grand debate at the end from a Cartesian premise on "Is one's life one's own?" I had no more idea of attracting anyone to a religious life than I had of persuading him to play the double bass, but if one speaks of what Christ said, people see what he is. He shines through.

One of the trustees came to the last lecture (they called them that too, being polite) and brought another man with him. I didn't see him until the end, when I noticed the intensity of his interest. He was the dread dilemma. He asked me to repeat the series in his town, and I had a wonderful time doing it. I stayed in his wife's house, liked their young sons and really loved her, and we again had luck with the audiences. They asked for a repetition of the second afternoon's attempt, and the only time I could make it was the morning of Memorial Day, so we had both men and women and a big lunch party, and then I wanted to get to an island

off Massachusetts for the beginning of the summer. By motoring seventy miles I could get to my son and his friends before their holiday was quite over. I tell all this to show how far I was from any effort to change an individual life. I was thinking about Christ's thinking and of the theories that derived from and drew toward his constructive truth. My host said he would drive me cross country to the train I needed to take in order to get my boat.

Everyone knows what elation there is in finishing an ordeal like speaking to people where one may not misquote, or must stand challenge if one distorts or exaggerates. I had faced a lot of challenge about the link between Spinoza and Descartes from the Jewish girls at the college who couldn't bear to feel that a Jewish philosopher owed derivations to a Jesuit thinker. They digressed, and finally said that the Jewish persecution in Germany began in the Passion Play at Oberammergau, and the Christian girls broke into unaffected laughter, so there was nothing to do but talk it out honestly with decreasing excitement and wider knowledge. It was the only incident that marred the college series and there had been nothing like it in the series repetition, so I loved it and was happy in meeting a lot of kind people and thinking that in spite of advancing years—and a steadily advancing figure!—I could ride a horse next day and swim if the sun were bright and be read aloud to in

the evening and never once hear the telephone bell.

We set off in my host's high-powered car, but when we got to our destination, we found the train was to be held for the arrival of an ambulance containing a high official who had been seized with some malady while fishing and had to get to a surgeon. We parked on a wooded height overlooking the line and station, and sat on a motor rug by a lovely beech tree.

"What is that book?" my host asked me.

"Notes for all that rigmarole you've been listening to for six and one quarter May hours."

"What are you going to do with them?"

"Forget them."

"I shan't," he answered; "will you give them to me?"

"But of course—they're of no further use to me."

"What a gracious way to give a present," he said, contemptuously.

I admitted it.

"What in God's name does a man do with sympathy for Christ in this damnable world?" he cried out. "Why do I feel it? What right have I to it? How can I get rid of it?"

I looked at him and in a flash I knew his mind. Collective experience, intuition or a tiny transference of the wisdom of God showed me the growth of duality in him, breaking out the walls of tradi-

tion and principle, with—what seemed to him—a tragic displacement.

“You can’t eradicate it wholly,” I said, “but you can dilute it by training your mind away from it and by substituting physical excitements for spiritual ones.”

“I know that,” he agreed. “Why was that Episcopal clergyman today so down on emotional religion?” he asked me.

“Because he doesn’t realize that emotion is the driving power of all human progress. What he really meant to combat was emotion badly expressed and soon abandoned. You and I feel the deepest emotion at the thought of Christ fighting knavery in the Temple, and, undeterred, persuading men to a spiritual birth in the realization of God’s Spirit—not to let go of high realizations in the face of adverse human experience is divine.”

“Possibly,” he answered.

I remember wishing that the train would come. I had reached the saturation phase in human companionship, but he caused me to absorb a lot more.

“In the past five weeks,” he said, “these people up here have told you a lot of things about themselves, and we are impressed with the fact that you’ve not, even vaguely, discussed one with the other.”

“One learns that by living in foreign communities,” I explained. “That’s not a virtue, that’s an

accomplishment life imposes on one for one's protection, one's social survival where social undercurrents cannot be understood. Perhaps it's more caution than honor that makes one reticent."

"I would trust caution as honor's protective agent as well as mine," he declared.

I remember asking him very lightly if he were planning to confide in me and being amazed when he said he was.

"I'd like to be serious," he told me, and after that in soul-wrenching jerks he laid before me a horrid story. He said that he had never been estranged from his wife, but that in the course of a business convention that sounded to me like a drinking bout, he had met a youngish woman who was a friend of one of the ladies whose husband was an associate of his. Little by little he had grown to know her well and had finally settled her in a New York apartment. Like many Eastern business men, he was very often in New York on business and in the great hotel in which he stayed he was free to go where he pleased unsupervised. For some reason the books his friends had read in connection with the philosophy class had interested him too and he had become convinced of the reality of religious experience, the validity of aspiration and the authenticity of Christian talent for social adjustment. It is very hard for me to express his outlook and his introspection. It was

unlike anything I've known. He admitted that he had put both his wife and her rival in very unkind circumstances, but he said that humanly speaking he was quite secure in the assurance that they would never know what they were. He arrived then at the crux of the whole matter: he felt that he couldn't remain in the light that sometimes fell on him without making some alteration in his way of living.

"I'm so awfully sorry for what I've done," he repeated over and over. "I'm in a mess all the time without any fear of detection. I'm aware of the Great Spirit, I sympathize intensely with Christ and agree with the attempts to fulfil his desires of more than one church in my town, but I don't dare follow my impulse to worship; I don't dare pray."

"I think you're tired of that poor woman and the whole connection," I told him. "You've absorbed a new standard."

"Of course I have," he admitted, "and that's as much good as it does me."

He had never read *I Follow the Road*, and I didn't feel he would like it very much if I told him about it, so I tried to show him how a mind could be built and fortified and made a dwelling place for Christ's influences. But he merely said: "I feel a most awful skunk when I'm at home and a weak vulgar ass when I'm not. I feel as if I had no dis-

tion, no personality, but was one more cheap commercial nobody who bought presents for a woman not his wife."

I begged him to talk with a sensible and religious man, and I told him I was sure he could simplify his life if he lived in Christ's mind, shut himself up in his life, studied his attitude toward loyalty. The train started away very late and I felt so sad at what he had told me that I found myself praying not so much for him as for his wife and for the poor forsaken creature who had nothing to fall back on when he should have left her. And then indignation burned in me at his not taking hold of the situation himself. I felt it to be weak to ask advice about a matter so vital, a situation classically familiar. To come asking pity for himself when, if facts were known, hideous pain would result, floored me completely. I was tired out with his vivid presentment of a situation that had to be someone's tragedy no matter what happened, I knew I couldn't attack it specifically, and my mind seesawed from sympathy for one to sympathy for another. I wished with all my heart that I had been told nothing about it, and finally I prayed for strength to turn it out of my mind until I was rested enough to think of it sanely. As I found my friend had begun to devour devotional books and records of religious experiences, I sent him *I Follow the Road*, but the thought pattern he made



was of compensatory service to God, deeds done to balance his "irregularity," as he euphoniously called it. He wrote me how much he wanted to feel forgiveness for what he knew to be very wrong and I sent him on a postcard what Hamlet's step-father said when he was trying to pray: "May one be pardon'd and retain the offense?"

He wore himself to a shadow working for the united hospital campaign where he lived, and that kept him out of New York, but I fancy his absence brought grief and disquiet to one of its inhabitants. He does wonderfully generous and sacrificial things, spends a great deal of time with his sons, is courteous and charming to his wife, reads all sorts of religious books, but, he has just told me in real sadness, cannot bring himself to end his secret relation with the woman outside his acknowledged circle.

"Think of the sorrow I should cause her," he says.

I don't see how he can endure it—often he looks gaunt and grieving when I catch a glimpse of him. He doesn't seem to regret having told me about it, and he performs "compensatory" acts, but he should have rid himself of fraud in the power of Christ, and I look on him, although I know I oughtn't to judge him—as a failure. One thing he has never said and I honor him for it. He has never said, "I am no worse than lots of men;" and when I showed

him what I have written about him, he said, "I shall have to endure being a failure or else alienate my family, and I love them dearly." How I wish I knew nothing about all this! It depresses me terribly. I feel that within him is God's voice if he would but hear it, and his idea of compensatory deeds seems entirely too mad to have emanated from a cool head. But it doesn't, it emanates from a sick heart.

Early last autumn I was coming from the close of the summer camp our older friend has given the Federation of Protestant churches in a Canadian town for their Boy Scouts. Twenty boys are elected at the end of the season to invite sixty others from Canada and the U. S. A. for the next summer, and this sixty are vouched for by the churches whence they come. It was very interesting, and ended with a Thanksgiving service for the joy of the stream and forest, the sky, sun and stars, conducted by a young clergyman and the boys themselves. Full of the happiness of those young people I stopped for lunch in the town of my dread dilemma. I had no idea he was in our country, I had heard of him in London. I had never seen the business part of the town and went out to look at it, finding myself in a dismal, crowded place, not as exciting as a typical slum, but quite as depressing. I was confronted suddenly with a lovely Gothic lady chapel in the act of building. It

jutted toward the mean street in which I stood, and leaning against it in the shade was the dilemma himself studying the blueprint a grizzled earnest man was explaining to him. I went over the grass quietly and put my hand in his.

He was surprised and subdued and affectionate as he always is, and then he showed me the church—a poor attempt at the Gothic—at the front of this lovely little addition, explaining that the residential part of the town had receded from this quarter and that the church was to be torn down, when a young clergyman came who had “made a hit” and had filled a hitherto empty church to overflowing. He had roused people to the foulness of life in the district and the possibility of redeeming it.

“That’s how I got into it,” he said.

“Got into what?” I asked.

“Aren’t you here to laugh at me for building this chapel?”

“No—I didn’t know you were building it.”

He drew his foot along a gully filled with dried leaves fallen from the maple trees. I can hear their rustle now, I can see the shame and shadow on his thin and eager face.

“I shall probably never enter this place for a service,” he said presently, “and I shall probably never find myself in the kingdom of heaven, but at least I can help build a needed edifice for the dispensation of Christ’s way of life.”

"Haven't you graduated from that stress yet?" I inquired.

"I can't. I'm bound hand and foot, I must either wreck the peace of mind of my dear Lucy or kill my wife. You know it would kill her if she knew."

I really thought it might, so I said nothing. Then I asked him how she felt about his building the lady chapel.

"She thinks it's my sound business sense; she believes that I wanted to help the town; and, after observation and advice, thought encouragement of the rector here was the most needed item for the town's progress."

He walked to the hotel with me; his wife was still abroad with their children.

"Lucy doesn't die because she knows you have a wife," I said, "why not take a chance on your wife's love and understanding? At least come clean."

"My dear," he said, "don't talk nonsense. I tell you that I love and reverence"—he paused and then said firmly, "our Christ more and more. Before I was aware of his existence I did a foolish thing, I must endure what the moralists call a double life as its consequence."

He walked along silently by my side.

"It is a great comfort to have someone I can speak to about it."

For a moment I was going to say, "I hate knowing it, I wish you wouldn't talk of it, there must be a way out of the secrecy and unkindness of this."

But I know that scolding is not of God. Quakers have demonstrated that to the ages. So I held my peace—his peace—in the sunny street and said as casually as I could, "Doctor Stanley Jones is, in my opinion, a Christ-centered mind. He believes—or I believe he believes—that if for the sake of Christ, Christian devotees forbear from or, in his phrase, surrender a specific ill, that Christ takes the place of what is surrendered."

"And what do you say?" he demanded.

"I don't say anything. I have gotten much more from Christ than ever I gave to him. If I have made what the pious call sacrifices, I haven't stopped to diagram them. They slide through my memory out of consciousness. They are only sacrifices of mood and time and ease, and if one is vitally interested in anything, sacred or profane, mood, time, and ease are gladly given."

I drove off and passed him once more as I left the town. If I had enough knowledge of God's power and how to apply it, that man wouldn't fail to solve his problem. What is wrong with me? Why am I a nonconductor when I want so much to give him what has answered many a riddle for me? He didn't see me as I drove by and yet I was very

near him. From one angle of his life he doesn't see Christ, and yet he is so near him.

Christ! let him look beyond the day  
In one all penetrating ray  
That shows the stain and finds the fray  
Of the coarse fabric that we knit  
Nor ever heed the woof of it.  
Nor let him dare to weave for thee  
A cloak from his iniquity.

I said that over to myself as a prayer for him.

## II

The third failure I love with all my heart. He is an old man, so noble, simple, generous, and despairing, that I love him with a mad sort of fervor that I am continually laughing at. His charming very old wife is depressed with his depression. It is a sad house. They have no children and take exaggerated care of themselves. A trained nurse lives with them and they have many other people beside. We came to know each other through the little book, *I Follow the Road*. He has a friend, a writer and editor of a magazine, who writes to him often, and once he sent him the book saying that for a perfectly secular and fortuitous reason—he liked it. My friend reads everything he mentions, so he promptly gulped this, intending to feel just as his much-respected friend did. He

told me that for the first time in their intercourse he disagreed with him utterly and offered to come see me and talk with me. I knew all about him, in the past he has been an active person—so I told him that one day when I was in the country over the week end I'd come over and see them—he lived in the spring and autumn less than ten miles away. I did, in the blazing noon of a day in early December.

I entered a house after my own heart, sunny, and rather empty, but in each room a special loveliness was enthroned—some modern but excellent picture. I was greeted by his wife, who took me out to a terrace, where I found her husband. We were packed into fur-lined chairs for a sunbath and covered with fur. I was never so boiling hot in my life.

“With your permission, I will arrange the dictaphone for you,” his nurse said before she left us. “Mr. —’s memory is not always perfect.” I minded that less than a notebook.

My dear sad friend began in a very businesslike fashion: “My attention was directed to your book by Mr. Smith—in itself a recommendation. It arrested my interest and has held it. By imitating your experiments I have arrived—in part—at your results. But let us come to the point; how do you arrive at the conclusions that Christ was a Saviour for all ages, when he left no program for the indus-

trialist? I was an industrialist, and the money I give outright as the money I use to live well—which is the noblest giving—believe it or not—I derive from industries.”

“If you think Christ left no word for the modern industrialist,” I answered, “you are mad as a hatter. Give me a minute to mobilize my random rebuttal.” I did what I call thinking and then I spoke.

“Every age sprays light,” I said, “on the eternal text. The Puritans explored death and brought up sensationalism of a mortuary cast; that was the fashion in their day—death, denial of beauty, and damnation. The reaction from that is Christian Science; it’s nearer the bull’s-eye of Christ’s triumph—but it pays no attention to the duality implicit in life. Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, but the light in which he is revealed is ever changing. In a day of unchallenged social oppression and dirt-born epidemics (doctors wore beards very lately—Pasteur did), the church had its vogue, more as a fire escape than the lane in which men met the Christian mind. Ecclesiastics tampered with Christ’s truth in the interests of punitive threats; they tamper with them today, sometimes in Pollyanna fashion. We are asked to forget, not all his benefits—we are urged to remember them—but to forget our own responsibilities if we like. And the world is out of hand because of this changed emphasis. Our conclusions differ from



those of an older day, and yet they are not really contemporaneous. They are very much behind the times or quite ahead of them. Vide the war adherents and the 'peace people.' Peace people think ahead of our time, war people are behind to-day's social practice."

"I concede that," he answered.

I observed that he said very little, and that attracted me.

"But what lesson can we draw for community life from any record in the New Testament?" he added.

From my remembrance came help.

"Have you the New Testament in the house?" I inquired. He brought a most elegant copy of it out of the side pocket of his sea chair.

"Turn to Saint Luke," I commanded, like my idea of a mandatory monk. He did.

"Christ went into the wilderness and confronted emptiness. The devil, in the story, suggested his turning the stones into bread, and Christ refused to use his power for himself alone. He said that man lived by things other than bread, and continued to fast, but the next story is the next step in the spiritual instinct of human service. He had gone with his mother to a wedding."

I recalled with what ill grace my young son goes with me to family weddings and fell into an amused silence.

"Go on, I think I see the germ of an industrial program," my friend said.

"Of course you do if you look at the text in the light of contemporaneous need. When the people needed wine 'to furnish forth the marriage feast,' he used the power he denied his own necessity to meet a community demand. Isn't an industrial program implicit in those tales and their juxtaposition?"

"I'd rather find a social prospectus in those stories than a mere assertion of magic as in the Middle Ages," he observed.

"Magic wasn't the only thing the Middle Ages found in them," I cried, "their painters found a color and composition in them that may never come again."

He began to talk about how deeply concerned he was about social justice and how sure he was that attacking a system advanced no one but the demagogues.

"Almost any system is subject to reform if a human being with a spiritual outlook is at its center," he told me. "Man's social vision today parallels the telescope which brings the planets near to us. We see farther and clearer in a social sense than ever before because we see through the medium of brotherhood which brings the people near us. Christ started that and I must say England carried it on."

He told me many things of which I'd never heard. Names that were new to me fell from his lips. I was held by the simplicity of statement and breadth of thought he showed me. I couldn't bear to go away, but I had to, and as we parted he clung to my hand like a child and said: "I want wisdom to effect a change in an industry where I still have influence. I want energy, tact, and terse presentment. People recoil from sacred names in my business; those names have been invoked by self-indulgent hypocrites, and robbing Peter to pay Paul isn't a real solution of the world's economic problems. I must begin at once, for I am very old. Your sermon from those two fantastic stories is new to me."

"I don't believe it would be to churchgoers," I answered, "it's so obvious. Everyone who reads the Bible must have thought of it."

"Perhaps," he assented listlessly.

He was dejected as I left him, depressed. I wanted to gather him to me and sing to him, tell him a story to make him forget, but one can't do that kind of thing to dignified old gentlemen, so I departed with a sense of incompleteness. How could such a white-souled old person be so frightfully sad? He was absolutely one with the saints in effort for a better world, he searched the Scriptures, he lived with Christ, and he was as gloomy as a damp cave, and he still is.

Only a very short time ago I heard of a division

he had effected in the ownership of a small subsidiary company in which he has great influence. The directors are young men and accustomed to ideas of labor's co-operation in administration. I heard that it was bound to attract attention and provoke some men to wrath. I drove over to tell him how grand it was to be full of fight at his time of life. It was a dismal day and luggage was being dispatched to Florida.

He and his wife were starting out next day, the house was partly shrouded, but fires and flowers made the room we sat in quite livable. He said he hadn't been able to do what he had planned, that he was blocked everywhere; his wife said she had never known him to be more disheartened. He said he had come to realize that it is wicked not to be the buyer of beautiful creations in the world of art and he was thinking about how lazy and negligent he had been in the matter of buying beauty. He was tearfully recalling a portrait bust he had failed to give a home to a long time ago, and his wife was explaining to me how awful it was that beauty should have to beg. I told them both they must really cheer up or I should be in tears myself; their despair seemed very wrongheaded.

"You have everything," I cried, "but you break your hearts trying to hurry God—you can't shame him into the millennium; we have to grow up to it ourselves. Do what you can with all the wonder-

ful love you feel for humanity and give up afflicting it with your despair that you can't do more. You're incorrigibly doleful; you don't rejoice in a vision of God's world as it ought to be; you mourn a state of society yet to be born as if it had lately died."

I left them uncomforted, frail, old, active, and loving, always with faces turned toward God and hands held out to those who suffer. Just but joyless—how can one explain that?

Those few people who know them at all speak of them with deep respect, but add something like, "I don't know them very well, they're retiring people and rather gloomy."

They have put suffering in the central place, the place that should be our Saviour's; it cuts off his radiation and lessens the light of the world. I often wonder what the soil is in which this distress is grown. They possess so much that should bring about strength and gladness, but they are spiritual failures; morally and socially efficient in so many ways, but inexplicably mournful in a world of men and women who need only to find joy in others to be made happy themselves. If they could be of good cheer because they feel the world will be overcome, if they could admit advance in human feeling and social practice I shouldn't have them so much in my mind and in my heart. I love and admire them, but when I go to see them I fortify

myself with the sense of Christ's presence in the world today before I dare face their pessimism.

### III

Having shown that one fails and makes others fail, I think I may end this record of human impulse toward union with Christ's mind by showing one of the happiest outcomes of all the friendships, the ideas and thought patterns, the hopes and prayers and visions, that life has brought me. I love the friends that little book, *I Follow the Road*, has brought me; they help me in what I try to do, they show me a thousand beauties of Christianity that I couldn't have found for myself, and they realize that Christ's mind is a soil in which we grow high and hopeful, putting out words beyond our own wisdom, as a plant puts out leaves and flowering, in a manifold sympathy and discernment. This happiest outcome is a young couple in one of our great cities. They are talented, very widely known for the expression of their talents, and are beyond any economic concern as a result of their own efforts.

Through all his struggle and in his great success the young man has held to what is fine in life because of a religious experience that came to him in the course of his preparation for a competition for a decoration to be made for a public building. His foreign master advised him not to compete,

telling him that he hadn't the cultural background for a sustained design in which justice and mercy were to be personified.

"You're crude," he said, "you wouldn't know any story fresh enough to be the basis of a work like that."

He was a social creature, fond of being with other men and women, but he tore himself free of them and went to a flat little town in France and read one book after the other, looking for an example of mercy. He devoured a long list of classics, trying to find justice; he was discouraged and found himself whining to an Englishman of about his own age, who was trapped in the town waiting for an old servant of his mother's to die. It is interesting to hear him tell how he kept meeting this young man as he walked in the town at dusk and how they shyly drew toward one another, and how the young American felt amazement when he found that an earl's son could be so simple in mind and so devoted to an old Frenchwoman who had served his mother well. "If she had relatives, you know," he said, "I'd get out of this at once, but as she hasn't, I have to stand by."

They played tennis together, and early one morning the young Englishman stopped in the studio to say good-by; the old servant's life here was at an end. He was shaken by his vigil, by the tenacity of a life that illness had made worthless, and in the

excitement and relief of her end his tongue was loosened and he began to speak his mind. He was the first really religious person to whom my friend had ever spoken and when the young man saw that he was impressing him, interesting him, he told him of the deep and secret companionship he had with Christ. He said: "Christ runs like a river through all my thinking, and my deeds are like little boats that are carried on the current of it. What I see of life's shores as they pass I know cannot be permanent, so if they are not lovely I wait until we come to those that are. But I have always the sense of motion, and the hope of making my boats so strong that they may sail the sea."

"If Christ is a river, why go to sea?" my friend said, as he confesses, "trying to be smart."

"I think of the sea as the union of Christ in God," his friend answered. "I have no authority for those images except the suggestion of experience; we live where a river joins the sea."

My friend was so moved and fascinated that he gave up the day to him and saw him off at the station, and then he feared that the sense of what he had said would grow dim. He began to paint Mercy as if she were Christ's sister, and Justice as if she were unknown to him. I have seen the photograph of what he made, and I wonder that it won the competition because I think he painted Justice more like retribution than justice. In his



decoration Justice wields a whip and Mercy interposes her body between it and the culprit. But that's beside the point, for he found growing upon him the same companionship; his reading became almost entirely Christian, and his old habit of spending a great deal of time with other painters had to be broken because he had constant work. But one day he met one who was to become his wife. She had been in a bad scrape, she was going back to a very conventional family, she had not yet found her best means of expression. She was bruised, dazed, broken. I don't know if it were her charm or his chivalry that made that match, but it was three years of tragedy for both of them—those first three years of marriage.

She wanted to spend his money for things he loathed, she drank a lot, and brought to their house the people who talk and sit up late. She gave up work for almost a year, and the people he liked most begged him to pension her if he wouldn't divorce her.

Drink made her ill, and one day as she was crawling up from a bad cold combined with a reckless motor trip, she asked her husband why he stuck to her. He told her of his friendship in the flat French town and of his own boats on the river of life and of the absorbing companionship that fed and surrounded his mind. He explained his feeling of forbearance as inevitable, since he

associated her with mercy and understanding, and he told her to count on his loyalty as long as she needed him.

That girl's conversion is an authentic spiritual episode in the lives of her group. She had the will to accept all that her husband had, but felt the need of a technique, as we all do, to express it, to develop desire into some sort of telling practice.

"Are you very religious?" she asked her nurse, who replied that she tried to be. Her nurse was a friend of my dear Jane, and that is how she got hold of the little book and of me. It was a long process, because she wanted to waste violent effort on details. She had never read anything but books on how to draw, and very few of them.

She began to work again, and she insisted on coming to me once a week, as if I were a doctor. She found reading dreadfully hard, and her husband quite by accident began to read to her. She developed a new kind of mental facility—the ability to remember formulas and lists of kings and Popes and presidents. And her chronological sense is extraordinary.

She has developed into a happy saint. Her rule of life is rigid. She goes out very little, but every Sunday she opens her house to young painters and has someone talk to them; and if there is sorrow or distress, she is at hand to lessen it. The burden of hospitality was dreadful to her at first, but she

likes it now, and her beauty and charm grow with its exercise.

This couple cannot take its place in this record of remedial agency as it takes its place in life, because its function is so explicit and complete. Man and wife are dwelling places of the most high, and their simplicity, their undiscouraged service and their determined quest of Christ are unbelievable to those about them, who knew the painter as a detached but unmistakable talent, his wife as a common and self-indulgent vulgarian, a handsome but predatory animal. She had a rather clever historian from a Western college speak to her guests one evening on "Jealousy in History." She agreed with me that jealousy next to fraud is the biggest force in spiritual deterioration, and she found jealousy all about her, poisoning youth and making both failure and success a hard hour for victor and vanquished alike. She was thinking especially of painters of the second rank for whom a special competition had been arranged for a fireside mural, preferably a chimney-breast decoration. It had been won by a doddering old person in a rural district, who—the others said—had no right to know there was a competition anyway. At first she thought it was just funny, but after a bit it grew very serious; one of the unsuccessful attempted his life. Then one evening as I was walking with them to watch the light-pierced cliffs of Manhattan office

buildings for a mural he was making for the office of a radio executive, he said: "We have a prick of jealousy when we feel just as much your children as anyone and yet you never call us so. That's why we feel so near to the poor devils who have honest-to-goodness pangs of the beastly thing."

"I'm proud of those pricks," I told them, "and the reason I haven't claimed you as children is that I thought you'd think me an old idiot, sentimental to lunacy."

The upshot of that was their Christmas party—copied from the Christmas party I have for my very own every year. We were three: the man, the wife, and the older woman—memory, service, and the many candles for the lights of hope. We sat by a Christmas tree, smelling the forest, and speaking of the kingly seekers who followed light to the source of the mind's light. They seemed to us pioneers of the inner life, picturesque figures who began the great procession of the God-conscious into whose ranks came James and John, Saint Augustine, Saint Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, Luther, Spinoza, John Wesley.

"Look along the ages in either direction from the Renaissance and count the throngs with their leaders," we said. We did.

And then the painter began to show us his foundation. He said he thought sometimes that "God looketh on the heart" was one way of saying, "God

measures man's consciousness of him as well as man's expression of it." When the tumbler performed his tricks before the image of the virgin of Notre Dame as tribute to her, it seemed a quaint and touching tribute to most of us, but when man conscientiously undertook the deviltries of the *auto-da-fé* it doesn't any more appear to us as a worthy acknowledgment of God's reign. But perhaps a measure of God's consciousness was in it. His wife said the Quakers seemed to her the only sect that had been ethically right from its beginning, and her husband answered that was because they were always looking for Christ in other people, having found him in themselves. They have made me presents which are often exhibited, so that I can't have them always with me except in memory, but I love them dearly.

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My daughter (God bless her) painted in her miniature fashion a square thirteen inches by thirteen inches of de Nouë, dying in Canada's snow, in an attitude of prayer, as his party from whom he was separated found him after he was dead. She had written on a card what the picture is now called, "My breath to heaven in vapor goes, may my soul follow soon." There are snow-bent hemlocks, and stiff fingers fumble his prayer beads, his wild white hair is outside the collar of his long

black gown and his face is lifted to God and turned to us who gaze on him. In that is the picture's symbolism.

And my other Christmas card is the study of a mural not yet completed for a college chapel. It is three crosses by the wayside, and all who stand near them shine against the blackness of eternal darkness in the strange light that pours from a limp human figure that sags in pained exhaustion at the limit of mortal endurance. It is starkly modern, blunt in treatment, provocative, able.

To me those pictures and the personalities evoking them are the final rule of the road. Those who realize God speak to him in their own voices, travel the road to him at their own pace, gaze on their guide with individual and sometimes faulty vision. But they realize God. Humble in heart yet hopeful, consecutive in effort but brave to acknowledge defeat, willing to sacrifice interest in religious mysteries to the immanence of Christian duties, and believing in the necessity of surrendering intellectual preferential opinion that hands may join with those of fellow travelers whose emotions are forces dedicated to Christ and to his company, we may yet attain the sweet and blessed country, where roads run level on blue heights, and where a soft and steady wind blows one Name in welcome from sea and shore, from hill and fertile plain.













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